

Precept Upon Precept

Volume 1

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Volume 1

by
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Grace-eBooks.com Publications
2018

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ISBN 978-1-387-68365-9

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Foreword

Henry T. Mahan was born in Birmingham, Alabama on August 19, 1926. He began pastoring at the young age of twenty-one and has wide experience in the pastoral ministry, and as a Bible Conference speaker. He was pastor of Thirteenth Street Baptist Church, Ashland, Kentucky, for fifty years, having retired in 2003. Today he lives in Rocky Mount, Virginia.

For his congregation's spiritual instruction, Pastor Mahan published a weekly bulletin over those fifty years, sharing them by mail with other pastors, churches, and believers around the country. Many of those pastors have used the bulletin articles extensively in their own church bulletins.

Having personally benefited over the last thirty-six years in reading the articles, and using them the last twenty four years of my ministry at Zebulon Baptist Church, you will always find them full of the gospel of Christ. Pastor Mahan continually points sinners to look to Christ for all of salvation, and they are full of strong and vital instructions from the word of the Lord—constantly declaring that salvation is of the Lord.

We are now very excited, and thankful for the opportunity, to put these bulletin articles from 1979-1987 into book format for distribution. It is our prayer the Lord will bless these short articles to the furtherance of the gospel, to the comfort of the believer, and to the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Pastor Tom Harding
Zebulon Baptist Church
Pikeville, Kentucky

Bulletin Articles of Henry Mahan For the Year 1979

A Saviour Born

Unto you is born a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.

Luke 2:11

This is the good news, that the Saviour born is none other than Christ, the Lord. There is no good news if he is not the Lord God! It is not good news that a great prophet is born. Moses was a great prophet but he is dead. It is not good news that another priest is born. Aaron was a great high priest but others have taken his place by reason of death. It is not good news that a good king is born, David was a good king but he sleeps even as do the wicked kings. But if you tell me that the one born in Bethlehem is none other than the eternal God Who is Prophet, Priest and King—that is good news! He ever lives to make intercession. He eternally reigns with all authority. He will never leave nor forsake me. If, the God-Man is my Saviour—that is good news!

The Hope of Righteousness

We through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith.

Galatians 5:5

We are in the habit of saying, "There are only two classes of people in the world; those who are saved and those who are lost: those who have accepted Jesus Christ and those who haven't." I suppose that this is actually true, but oversimplifying the great work of justification and regeneration has led to some great errors.

1. The error of *easy believism* and *decisionism*. Men walk the aisle, make a decision and rest in this refuge.

2. The error of the *carnal Christian* theory. One accepts Jesus as Saviour and later on, if convenient, makes him Lord of his life.

3. The error of *carnal security*. If one has made a decision for Christ at sometime in his life, he is eternally secure and can never be lost.

4. The error of *religious exhibitionism*. "I've found it" is shouted from the bumper of his car. "It's fun being saved" is pinned to his lapel. Tomorrow he may get mad and quit, but today he is "gung ho" for Jesus!

The Lord has hedged us about on the one side with precious promises lest we despair and the other with strong warnings lest we presume! Oh for the marks of a real work of grace, the evidences of real revival, when men and women who are being saved walk before God in humility, in faith, in meaningful confession of sin and with a broken heart and contrite spirit. "We through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith." (Gal. 5:5).

"Here I raise mine ebenezer—
Hither by thy help I'm come;
And I hope by thy good pleasure
Safely to arrive at home."

Better to press with strong desire into the kingdom than to sleep with the foolish virgins in the lap of presumption, and to hear the door shut while we hunt oil!

No Condemnation In Christ

He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

John 3:18

When a man believes in and receives the Lord Jesus Christ, he is justified before God so completely that he is as though he had never sinned at all! Actually, he is in a much better position than if he had never sinned; for if he had never sinned he would have the righteousness of man and still be subject to fall. But in Christ by faith, he is made the righteousness of God eternally. That thief on the cross was as black as Hell—he believes on Christ, and is in that moment as white as Heaven's own purity. "With his spotless garments on, we are holy as God's own Son." This is the glory of the grace of God in Christ. Christ does not take away a part of our sins, but all of them. Christ does not remove sin partially, but entirely. Christ does not blot out sin for a little while, but eternally. There is in Christ "No spot, wrinkle, or any such thing." We are holy and without blame—faultless!

Let us never be ashamed to declare in no uncertain terms, "He that believeth on him is not condemned." This glorious message of free grace: of justification by faith, needs no defense. It does not need to be protected by feeble flesh—it only needs to be preached! By the time we filter the gospel through our conditions, our requirements, our evidences, our examinations, and our councils to receive members, it does not come out justification by faith at all, but justification and sanctification by works.

"My sins O the bliss of that glorious thought
My sins, not in part, but the whole,
Are nailed to the cross
And I bear them no more
Praise the Lord, it is well with my soul."

There is a certain truth, that trust in God and prayer always go together. "Trust in him at all times, ye people; pour out your hearts

before him." If the heart be set on God our communication with him will be frequent.

Let Not Your Heart Be Troubled

Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me.

John 14:1

We have here a royal command. Do not give way to despair, depression, doubts and fears, for a troubled heart is dishonoring to our heavenly Father.

1. It puts a question mark on his love. "Nothing good will he withhold from them that fear him." His love designs and desires eternal good for his children.

2. It puts a question mark on his providence. "We know that all things work together for good to them who love him, who are the called according to his purpose." Though Job lost all, he did not charge God with foolishness.

3. It puts a question mark on his promises. "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." "Lo, I am with you always." "If ye being evil know how to give good things to your children how much more shall your heavenly Father give good things to them that ask him."

4. It robs us of the joys and blessings God has given us. When I am murmuring and complaining about what I want which I do not have, I am overlooking the great mercies and blessings I do possess. It may be true that I do not have all that I want but I have much more than I deserve. My circumstances may not be as good as I want them to be, but neither are they as bad as they could be.

Besides the royal command, we have the cure for heart trouble. It is faith! "Let not your heart be troubled—ye believe in God, believe also in me." There is no want he cannot supply; there is no sickness

he cannot heal; there is no danger he cannot prevent; there is no misery he cannot remove; there is no sin he cannot forgive; there is no enemy he cannot defeat. Christ is God in our nature—so near at hand and so accessible to our faith. David said in Psa. 42:5—"Why art thou cast down, O my soul? And why art thou disquieted in me? Hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance."

Confessing Christ

Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I also confess before my Father, which is in heaven.

Matthew 10:32

Are men correct in thinking that because they made a profession of faith some years back, were baptized, joined a local church and adopted a sound system of theology, they are confessing Christ before men. We are going to find out someday, to our eternal woe, that confessing Christ before men involves a great deal more than an isolated decision. Confessing Christ before men is a constant identification with Christ in a world that does not know or love Christ. To be identified with Christ is to be so closely associated with him that his interests are your interests; his friends are your friends; his enemies are your enemies; his glory is your glory; his will is your will; and his Word is your rule of life. "Where I am, there ye may be also" John 14:3. Where is Christ? Those confessing him and identified with him will be there also!

We are crucified with Christ, buried with him in baptism, walking with him in the light of the Scripture, righteousness and truth, at his feet in humility, assembled with his people in worship and praise, bearing his reproach, forgiving as he forgave, loving as he loved, and waiting for his return. In other words confessing Christ before men is to be so closely associated with Christ that one is called in truth by others—*A Christian!*

Justification

Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.

Romans 3:28

The greatest sinner, whatever his past sins or present infirmities, or future problems; any son of Adam, Jew or Gentile, black or white, old or young; can be freely and completely justified before the most high God—all his sins pardoned, blotted out and forgotten by believing on the Lord Jesus Christ. By faith in Christ that sinner has a perfect holiness before God.

To state this so positively upsets many well-meaning religious people. We are told by them that it is dangerous doctrine which may lead men to live in sin while professing to be saved by Christ. They add: A man can be saved by faith in Christ; if he is genuinely convicted of sin, if he has mourned apart, if he has repented sufficiently, if he is scripturally baptized, if he abstains from worldliness, if he holds the correct doctrine, if he does not succumb to any great sin!

Brethren, I don't know who appointed us guardians of the promises of God or watchdogs of his grace but the scriptures plainly says, "He that believeth on the Son of God hath eternal life." I plan to leave it right there, adding nothing and taking nothing away. Jesus Christ is the all-sufficient Saviour and he that believeth on him is not condemned. I also add that this matter of justification by faith is the article by which a church—a minister and a professor of Christianity stands or falls. There is no bridge between merit and mercy. They are as far apart as the poles and never the twain shall meet.

The Comforter

If I go not away the Comforter will not come.

John 16:7

By going away Christ refers to his death, resurrection and intercession. He goes to open the way for us into the holiest, to take possession of heaven in our stead, and to intercede for us. If he does not do this, there is no reason for the Holy Spirit to come. He would have no blood to sprinkle, no salvation to apply, no gospel to reveal, no righteousness to bring and no comfort to give.

"Come Holy Spirit, heavenly dove,
With all thy quickening power,
Kindle a flame of sacred love,
In these cold hearts of ours."

The Inward Change That Takes Place

Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.

2 Corinthians 5:17

There is no subject more important than the nature and extent of the inward change that takes place when a man is savingly joined to Christ. *"If any man be in Christ he is a new creation, old things are passed away and all things become new."* Some think that this sanctification is God's work alone, that man has no part or concern in the matter, but is wholly passive. We wake up one day and find that we are saved; wake up the next day and discover that we have grown to spiritual maturity! Others think that this sanctification is man's work entirely—that God gives us the means of grace and waits to see what we will make of ourselves. Both are wrong! We are the elect of God, chosen, quickened and made alive by the will and power of God, redeemed by Christ alone and sanctified by his grace—but this change is effected through knowledge and belief of the truth. 2 Thess.

2:13: 1 Peter 2:1-2 tell us that the Word of God is not only the means of grace but also of growth. God enables us both to will and to do his good pleasure and by his grace we desire and perform that which is commanded. I may be a strong believer in election but if I do not believe in the Lord Jesus Christ I will perish. I may believe in the security of the elect but if I do not continue in the faith I will hear him say, "Depart from me I never knew you."

"Separated Unto The Gospel"

Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an Apostle, separated unto the gospel of God.

Romans 1:1

I suppose the only preacher who ever really deserved a title refused to take one. He shunned the praise of men and the recognition of the flesh. It was not Rev. Paul, or Pr. Paul, or Bishop Paul, or even the Apostle Paul—just Paul! The greatest man born of woman, identified himself as only a voice in the wilderness, and the angel of Patmos rebuked John for paying homage to him, saying, "worship God!"

Paul considered being a bond-servant of Jesus Christ recognition enough and fit credentials to entitle him to be heard, but he added I am called to be an Apostle. I didn't take this responsibility upon myself—God put me in the ministry and entrusted his gospel to me.

I am separated unto the gospel of God! I will leave others to set in order the many ills of this world, the governments of nations and lifestyles of individuals and communities—my message is "Christ and him crucified." "I am determined to know nothing among you except Christ and him crucified." I must eat, drink and sleep like anyone else. I have expenses to meet like every man but the preacher who is separated unto the gospel will live by that gospel. When any opportunity, investment, or duty creeps in and takes time away from my preaching and study of that gospel, it must go. When any association, relationship or social contact tries to build a fellowship on

any other ground than the gospel, they must go! When I am tempted to demonstrate my vast knowledge of history, psychology, prophecy, personal counseling, and politics I must say "get thee behind me, Satan, for I am separated unto the gospel. I know how you hate the gospel of redeeming grace and how you will corrupt even the preacher's mind from the simplicity of Christ. I will not be deceived by your praise! I will not be taken in by your offers of security in old age or your warnings of failure I am separated unto the gospel!"

In My Flesh Dwelleth No Good Thing

For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not.

Romans 7:18

Not only Satan and false preachers, but our own flesh is an enemy of salvation by grace alone. Human nature always did kick against salvation by grace through faith and it always will. Even we ourselves, who know that Christ is our righteousness and sanctification, have to do battle with the urge to feel good, holy and wise; because of what we have done, given or learned. "Down, foolish thought, thou art the enemy of my soul." "In my flesh dwelleth no good thing." My one hope is pure grace, sovereign grace, grace unqualified! God blesses me because he is good, not because I am good. God saves me because he is gracious, not because I am gracious. God accepts me because of what Christ has done, not because of what I have done. Any good or grace manifested in me is not me at all, but Christ who dwelleth in me. I can take no credit for any act of mercy or any pure thought. Left to myself I would be no better than the most evil creature.

The Lord Has Blessed

The Lord has blessed this congregation beyond expression. Many, O Lord my God, are thy wonderful works which thou hast done, and thy thoughts which are to us-ward: They cannot be reckoned up in order unto thee: If I would declare and speak of them, they are more than can be numbered.

Psalm 40:5

Along with our ministry of the Word in this country, God has permitted us to have a part in the ministry of faithful missionaries in other countries. We are currently helping to support Brothers Walter Groover, Alphonso Estrada and Milton Howard in Mexico, Chris Robinson in Ireland, David Ellis in France, David Estrada in Spain, and Bill Clark in Europe. I am pleased to report that our Deacons and Elders have added David Surpless, missionary for many years to Puerto Rico and Timothy James missionary and pastor to the Cherokee Indians, to our missionary budget. These men will receive a monthly gift along with any designated offering that may be given by you for their ministry. You will have the privilege of meeting them when they come our way next year.

I do not believe in church saving accounts or church bank accounts—if you wish to save or invest your money, feel free to do so, but every gift that is given to this church will be immediately put to use in preaching the gospel. As the Lord supplies the means, we will increase our efforts to make Christ known through the TV ministry, the printed page, and faithful missionaries. I have found that the more we give the more God enables us to give. I only pray for more open doors and wisdom to recognize the hand of God and the will of God. I must not cast our bread to the winds but the waters. "Lord show me the waters! And give me faith to cast the bread cheerfully and generously."

Seven Faithful Promises

Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him: I will set him on high, because he hath known my name. He shall call upon me, and I will answer him: I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him, and honour him.

Psalm 91:14-15

To the believer, who dwells in the secret place of the most High (within the Veil) and under the shadow of the Almighty, the Lord gives seven faithful words.

1. I will deliver him because he has set his love upon me. I will deliver him from the penalty of sin, from the curse of the law and from all trials and troubles.

2. I will set him on high because he has known my name. Crucified with Christ, risen with Christ and seated with Christ in the heavenlies.

3. I will answer him when he calls upon me. I have answered him in his call for mercy and will continue to answer him in all that he prays for my glory and according to my will.

4. I will be with him in trouble. In this world he shall have trouble but I have overcome the world and his troubles shall all be for his good and my glory. I will never leave nor forsake him.

5. I will honor him with a new name. He shall be no more Jacob (cheat-cunning) but Israel (Prince of God).

6. I will satisfy him with long life. Perhaps a long life on earth but the longest here is but a vapor—rather, with *eternal life* I will satisfy him. "My sheep hear my voice and I give them eternal life!

7. I will show him my salvation and my glory. My salvation is Christ whom Simeon saw and exclaimed "Mine eyes have seen thy

salvation." And he shall be with me, "to behold my glory which thou gavest me before the world."

"When by His grace,
I shall look on His face
That will be glory—
Be glory for me."

The Church

"I don't go to church because there are so many hypocrites in the church." "My life is as good as most church people!" These are common statements heard everyday to which I reply; don't judge the whole body by the faults of some. It is our responsibility to worship and follow the Lord Jesus, not men. If our brethren have faults, let us pray for them and patiently bear their infirmities as we ask them to overlook ours. The church of the Lord Jesus Christ welcomes all who are lame, halt, and blind. We look not for a perfect church this side of heaven. It is better to sit beside the hypocrite in church than to suffer with him eternally.

Adorn The Doctrine

Adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.

Titus 2:10

What is it to adorn the doctrine? We can't do it with great building and fancy architecture! God's grace and glory are not in luxurious temples but in living temples. We can't do it with our mode of speech! Saying thee and thine will not make thee his child or change thine heart. We can't do it with religious uniforms and dress. Hypocrisy is the same under a black hat or no hat.

We can adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour with genuine love; both for Christ and all men. There is no greater proof of discipleship

than love. "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye love one another." There is no greater proof of an unregenerate heart than hate. "He that loveth not knoweth not God." We can adorn the doctrine with kindness. "Be ye kind one to another." "If ye forgive not men their sins, neither will your Father in Heaven forgive your sins." We can adorn the doctrine with patience under trial. What better way can I preach my belief and confidence in God's sovereignty than by joyfully submitting to his hand whether it be in blessing or chastening? We can adorn the doctrine with happiness. When did piety become synonymous with sour expression and a grouchy disposition? Paul tells us to rejoice in the Lord always. We can adorn the doctrine with a generous spirit. "It is more blessed to give than to receive." Greed, selfishness and self-interest do not reveal grace!

Faith

Now, Lord, what wait I for? My hope is in thee.

Psalm 39:7

Faith is the soil, and waiting upon God is a flower that grows out of it. "What wait I for?" I have not found it, yet I am waiting for it. I have no earthly expectations. Hope of finding anything here that can satisfy me is forgotten. My hope is in Christ. To see him; to be with him; to be like him! He will come for me some day; this is what I am waiting for, and nothing else!

Seeing Our Sin Compels Us To Flee To Christ

They shall look upon him whom they have pierced and they shall mourn for him.

Zechariah 12:10

There is no doubt that an awareness of our sins and iniquities compels us to flee to Christ for mercy and to believe on him for forgiveness. It was the inability and need that drove the woman with the issue of blood to Christ; that brought the harlot to his feet and the leper to worship him. But I believe that a true mourning for sin and lasting repentance comes from seeing Christ in his holiness, power, and sacrifice, "They shall look upon him whom they have pierced and they shall mourn for him." (Zech. 12:10).

Was this not the case with Isaiah, Job and even Saul of Tarsus? The more we see his holiness, the more we are made aware of our defilement; the more we behold his love, the more we are conscious of our lack of love; the more time we spend at his Cross of submission, the more we detect our selfishness. It is difficult to say which comes first, repentance or faith.

But I'm sure of this, more genuine repentance is produced by faith than faith produced by repentance. Someone once said, "Christ is worthy of adoration and worship even from those who have never sinned (as the elect angels). When we praise and worship him only because he saves us from sin, we do not properly understand his Lordship. David said, "When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy hand; what is man that thou art mindful of him?" (Psa. 8:3-4). This is the sight that really breaks the heart and humbles the proud spirit; to see our Sovereign Lord in his Redemptive Glory. No man can ever be the same after a Spirit-led trip to Calvary.

How Important is the Gospel?

There are some things that I might be wrong about and yet, I'll still go to heaven. It is possible to have an incorrect view of some doctrines but I must be right about the gospel. For if I am wrong here, then I am lost for eternity.

What is the gospel? As simply as I can put it is to say that it is the good news that Jesus Christ has come into the world to save ungodly sinners like you and me. God the Father had such love for us that he sent his own Son to live and die for Hell-deserving sinners. He lived to fulfill the Law of God, which I could never do. He died to secure my pardon. "With his stripes we are healed."

This is good news to me! For if I see myself to be thoroughly sinful and I have come to Christ. I've committed my soul to him for safe-keeping. He is my only hope of heaven and to Jesus alone I cling with the hands of faith. He is the way to the Father, to heaven and to eternal life. There is no other way. All other ways (baptism, works, church membership) are dead end streets and will end in Hell.

For it is written, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved" (Acts 16:31).

Two Important Areas

The two most important areas in our religion are *faith* and *life*. Spurgeon said: "He who understands these two words is not far from being a master in true theology."

Faith and union with Christ; these are the two vital points to a Christian; they cannot be separated! You will never find true faith where you do not find true godliness and union with Christ and you will never find true godliness where there is no saving faith. True faith results in a living union with Christ and true godliness has for its root and foundation a sincere and continuing faith in the person and work of Christ Jesus.

Christ Our Confidence and Assurance

We do not find rest, hope, or comfort in our faith but in Christ. If you will give careful thought to that statement it will be of great help to you. Faith is not a foundation, a refuge or a source of help. Faith is a means, a look, an empty hand! Christ is our refuge who protects from every storm, our rock on which we build, our source of every mercy and our only plea. My faith may be weak or weaker, but he cannot fail. If all my debts have been paid by my surety, I don't have to be ashamed to come before God. The praise and credit goes not to my boldness and faith but to my gracious benefactor! I'm not debt-free because I believe (though I do, and that faith united me to him) but because he set me free and paid & debt! Christ is our confidence and assurance. The moment I seek a reason for hope in anything I do, even in the blessed grace of faith, I forfeit any possibility of peace

What is the faith of God's elect?

Paul, a servant of God, and an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God's elect, and the acknowledging of the truth which is after godliness.

Titus 1:1

1. It is looking to Christ! - Isa. 45:22. Israel, in their helplessness, inability and dying condition looked to the brazen serpent. We look to Christ out of our bondage, sorrow and night. We look to him for saving grace, living grace and dying grace.

2. It is trusting Christ - Isa. 26:34-35. Being fully persuaded like Abraham, that what he has promised he is able to perform, we trust him and commit our souls to him.

3. It is to receive Christ - John 1:12. It is to receive Christ as he is, not as I think he is, or as I want him to be, or as someone says he is. But to receive him as he is revealed in his Word.

It is to receive him totally— not partially.

I hold out to you no “door-mat named Jesus” but a Sovereign, reigning Lord who says "Take my yoke upon you." A commitment to Christ Jesus is a total commitment to him as Prophet, Priest and King!

Grow In Grace

Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord.

2 Peter 1:2

Peter prayed for believers a multiplication of grace and peace through the knowledge of Christ. The grace and peace of God is infinite in Christ and knows no degrees, but through the Word of God, as I grow in the knowledge of Christ, there will be new discoveries of the love and favor of God to my soul. There will be a growth in the internal graces of love, faith, humility and gentleness, and an increase in spiritual peace in believing, in trials and in perseverance.

The Exalted Lord

Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.

Acts 2:36

1. Christ must be preached where he is now if we are to preach the gospel of his glory! Christ as prophet, teacher, healer and even as Savior, men will preach about, and accept; but Christ as Sovereign Lord of lords and King of kings men will not tolerate. If Christ is exalted at the right hand of God everything else about Christ is easy to believe. His resurrection declared him to be the Son of God—his exaltation declares him to be *Lord!* Peter closed his message in Acts 2 with these words "God had made this same Jesus, whom you

crucified, to be both Lord and Christ." This is the climax of true gospel preaching. Jesus Christ is Lord! God hath delivered all things, all authority, all judgment and all revelation into his hands.

2. Christ must be preached where he is now if we are to correctly receive him and call upon his name! Rom. 10:9 says "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus to be Lord...thou shalt be saved." Rom. 10:13 says—"Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."

One cannot confess, call upon, or receive a false conception of Jesus Christ and be saved. He is not a pitiful, helpless exile waiting to see what will happen. He is the enthroned Lord who has all power over all flesh to give eternal life to as many as the Father hath given him.

3. Christ must be preached where he is now if we who believe on him are to have a good hope! I can have a good hope of salvation because my exalted Lord is able to save, to keep and to raise my vile body. I can have a good hope of success in preaching the gospel because my exalted Lord has all authority in heaven and earth. I can have a good hope of living in heaven because my exalted Lord has entered and taken possession of that heavenly kingdom, and wills me to be with him and behold his glory!

Giving Unto The Lord

I will not offer unto the Lord my God that which costs me nothing!

2 Samuel 24:24

Why not have a rummage sale, candy sale, or a supper to raise money for the missionaries or the church? Why not a bond sale with high percentages returns? David gave us the answer when Araunah offered him the threshing floor, the oxen and the wood to sacrifice to the Lord (II Sam. 24:24). "I will not offer unto the Lord my God that which costs me nothing!"

A gracious heart will not try to serve God with that which costs him nothing. If it is worth nothing to you, it is worth less to God! Any gift, service, or effort for the glory of God that does not in some way involve the element of sacrifice or self-denial is of no spiritual value! Our examples in the scripture of *true* worship demand the *first-fruits*, the *firstling* of the flock and the *choice* lamb. God gave his Son—Abraham brought Isaac—the widow gave all she had! And we bring our used clothing, a collection of Coke bottles, and our spare time! God doesn't want your spare anything!

1. A gift which costs me nothing reveals a lack of faith in God's power to provide!

2. A gift which costs me nothing reveals a lack of love for the object of that gift. True love considers no labor, cost or difficulty too great.

3. A gift which costs me nothing reveals a lack of regard for God's glory and majesty. The prophet in Malachi 1:8 says "Bring your stale bread and your sick sheep to your governor and see if he will accept it."

4. A gift which costs me nothing will never be accepted by the Living God who said: "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross and follow me!"

"My life, my love I give to thee
Thou Son of God who died for me."

Light and Truth

The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, (sound) thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil (unsound) thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness – How great is that darkness.

Matthew 6:22-23

My whole physical being responds and acts according to what I see with my natural eye. The information comes through the eye and is transported to every nerve, emotion and faculty, and I act accordingly! This is also true of my spiritual life. What I see or understand, from the Word of God, the person and work of Christ, the preaching I hear, motivates my thinking, my attitude, my actions and my hope. If this eye of understanding is sound and truly taught of God, my whole being will be full of light and truth. My spiritual life will be lived for the glory of God. But if my eye of understanding is unsound and full of error my religious being will be full of darkness—and if what I call light is darkness *how great is that darkness!* It is double-darkness!

That's the reason that a man with no religion at all is easier to preach the gospel of grace to than the religionist. The heathen is in darkness but the religionist is hedged about with a darkness that surrounds his natural darkness. He has built up a false righteousness and a false idea of God which has to be destroyed before one can attack his natural unbelief. He is dead but he thinks he lives. He is naked but he thinks he is fully protected. He is sick but he thinks he is well. The religionist sits in the darkness of his castle and refuge of lies surrounded by the walls of false peace, decisionism, religious works and tradition. These too, are works of darkness and iniquity. No light will dispel his darkness of nature until the light of grace reduces to rubbish his righteousness and false religion. He will cry "I count them but dung that I may win Christ and be found in him."

Love For Others

Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.

Philippians 2:4

The failure of most preachers is traced not to the fact that they do not have a pastor's head, voice, and energy but they do not have a pastor's heart! The failure of most church members and professing Christians, to be a blessing to family, friends and outsiders, is not that you do not have the proper doctrine, the proper moral integrity and enthusiasm for truth; you don't have the proper attitude and love for others!

If you don't really love people (sinners and saints) they sense it, and they not only won't love you but they won't listen to you! If you are not really concerned about the everyday problems and burdens of others, they don't want to hear you talk about their spiritual problems! Most fundamental, separated, religionists I know are big head, big mouth and small heart! They want to talk about "the things of the Lord," but have little love and concern for the things of others. Don't blame all of your loneliness on the gospel; much of it is caused by your unlovely personality!

Faith Alone

Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.

Romans 3:28

The greatest sinner, whatever his past sins or present infirmities, or future problems; any son of Adam, Jew or Gentile, black or white, old or young; can be freely and completely justified before the most high God—all his sins pardoned, blotted out and forgotten by believing on the Lord Jesus Christ. By faith in Christ that sinner has a perfect holiness before God.

To state this so positively upsets many well-meaning religious people. We are told by them that it is dangerous doctrine which may lead men to live in sin while professing to be saved by Christ. They add: "A man can be saved by faith in Christ; if he is genuinely convicted of sin, if he has mourned apart, if he has repented sufficiently, if he is scripturally baptized, if he abstains from worldliness, if he holds the correct doctrine, if he does not succumb to any great sin!"

Brethren, I don't know who appointed us guardians of the promises of God or watchdogs of his grace, but the scriptures plainly says, "He that believeth on the Son of God hath eternal life." I plan to leave it right there, adding nothing and taking nothing away. Jesus Christ is the all-sufficient Saviour and he that believeth on him is not condemned. I also add that this matter of justification by faith is the article by which a church; a minister and a professor of Christianity stands or falls. There is no bridge between merit and mercy. They are as far apart as the poles and never the twain shall meet.

Laying Aside All Malice

Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings.

1 Peter 2:1

Usually when we think of malice we confine it to hatred or a deliberate desire to do harm to another as "with malice aforethought." But malice in a believer can take other directions. It might be a continual unfriendly feeling or attitude toward another person, or another race! It might be an unforgiving spirit that wishes no harm but holds a long-time grudge over past mistakes. It might be a secret desire to see another fail or to get what is coming to him. It might be an unwillingness to speak to another or to show common courtesy. It might be a spirit of pride which enjoys cutting another or humbling another to show our superior intelligence, courage or strength. It might be a gossips tongue which enjoys relating the weaknesses,

infirmities and failures of others. Call this what you will—but it all boils down to malice and ill-will which is unbecoming to those who are the objects of mercy. How can I have anything but pity and compassion for a fellow-worm?

When I Am Weak, Then Am I Strong

I suppose that the most difficult thing any believer has to learn is that *without him we can do nothing*.

John 15:5

This is our creed but not our experience! We will never be effectually used for God's true glory until it becomes our experience. God will never use means that are proud enough to think themselves necessary or capable. He will throw away the vessel that begins to boast in itself or allows others to boast in it. Whatever is our strength in the flesh is sure to become our weakness in the spirit whether it be our intelligence, our morality, our length of service, our doctrine, our courage or whatever. Gideon feared the Midianites because of the small number of his soldiers, but the Lord said, "Your soldiers are yet too many for me." I wonder if we will ever become weak enough, empty enough, and ignorant enough for God to use us for his glory.

The logic of the Lord is strange to the natural mind. "For when I am weak, then am I strong" (II Cor. 12:10). "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me" (II Cor. 12:9). The Lord must go back to the seashore and raise up some fishermen; we've all become masters and doctors, wise men in theology and great counselors. I disqualify myself for God's use when I become qualified. My fine talents and lofty credentials become hindrances rather than helps. I thought to prepare myself for great things only to learn that it was the rough voice in the wilderness he planned to use, not the polished preacher. It was the weak, impulsive shepherd with the sling he planned to use, not the mighty warrior with his armor of wit and arsenal of facts, doctrines, and learning. It may not be too late for some, but most are too proud to

become expendable. If we don't pour contempt on ourselves—God will!

The Storm Is In The Father's Hand

Years ago a boy asked his father why he was not afraid during a terrible storm and tempest. The father drew his hunting knife from his belt, put it to the boy's throat and said, "Are you afraid of this knife?" To which the boy replied, "No, sir!" Upon being asked why he was not afraid, the boy replied, "because it is in the hands of my father." "Well," said the father, "That storm is in the hands of my heavenly Father, therefore I am not afraid."

An Ideal Church

If your study of the New Testament Church makes you unhappy because you cannot find its counterpart in the world today, or at least in your neighborhood, let me remind you that there were no perfect or ideal churches in the New Testament, except, of course, "That glorious church, without spot or wrinkle, washed in the blood of the Lamb."

The local assemblies which met in various cities and towns during New Testament days were not perfect by any means. Corinth was troubled with divisions which were the results of spiritual immaturity. Colosse was troubled with vain philosophy. Galatia was troubled with the error of salvation by works; other churches had left their first love.

In spite of all these failings, our Lord walked among the golden candlesticks and held the seven stars in his right hand! The Bible points out the defects of these churches not to excuse people from assembling with the church, but to correct error and to exhort believers to a more consistent walk in holiness. The church is the people—"What kind of church would his church be, if all the members were just like me?" We would do well to take these epistles

not only as a pattern for New Testament churches but also as a pattern for New Testament christians!

The Key

People are always looking for the key to things; the one thing that will open for them the mysteries of life, of death, of personalities, of philosophy.

I believe I can give you the key to the Scriptures:

- 1). God's reign over all things.
- 2). Man's ruin by the fall.
- 3). Christ's redemption in the Cross.
- 4). The Holy Spirit's regenerating work.

What Happened at Pentecost?

Acts 2:22-36

There was a revelation of the sovereign Christ! Any great revival among men will only come when God is pleased to reveal who Christ is, what Christ did, why Christ suffered and where he is now! Any saving work God is pleased to perform for the sons of Adam will be accompanied by a clear revelation of the reigning and sovereign Christ.

The disciples were at the feast but they did not talk about themselves, their office, their success or the number of their followers. They preached Christ, the man, approved of God, ordained by God, crucified by men raised by God and exalted at God's right hand as Lord and Christ.

The Holy Spirit was at the feast but did not speak of himself, his office, his gifts or his power. He glorified Christ. He pricked the

hearts of sinners convicting of sin and revealing the sovereign Saviour.

The people were at the feast but they were not entertained by noted celebrities, choirs, elaborate programs, and wooed to make decisions for God. They heard a word of condemnation; they had rejected and crucified God's Christ. They heard a word of conviction; this same Jesus was raised from the dead, for no power can hold him; —Not death, for he is life; not darkness, for he is light; not sin, for he is righteousness; not men, for he is God. They heard a word of promise; he is exalted and made both Lord and Christ, with the power to save and the power to damn (Acts 2:36).

It may be that God will visit our generation with revival but it will not come through the preaching of a defeated, weak, powerless door-mat and reformer. It will come when preachers again sound forth clearly the gospel of God's glory, power, and sovereignty. Christ is Lord, bow down sinner, to the claims of King Jesus.

"My God, my God, Why Hast Thou Forsaken Me?"

Matthew 27:46

This was the center point of his sufferings. The most awful words ever to fall from the lips of man. It is said that Martin Luther sat down in his study to consider these words of our Lord. He sat for hours and stared at the scripture. He refused to eat, he would not be disturbed, repeating the words over and over again, finally, he arose, closed the Bible and shouted "God forsaking God! No man can understand that!" Perhaps not! And if we spend our time trying to determine *how* this can be rather than *why* it had to be, we will be as frustrated as he was. Christ is our substitute and he was forsaken of the Father because we deserved to be! He was found guilty and was executed under the wrath of God because we deserved to be. Christ is every believer in one person. He actually bore our sins in his body on the tree.

Another thought worth considering. If he had not spoken these words we would never have known that he was forsaken of God, or the extent of his soul agony.

The Resurrection Of Christ

And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain.

1 Corinthians 15:14

If we deny the reality of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, then the whole gospel is made void. He is truly the Son of God and the Saviour of sinners only if he came forth from the grave. However, if he did not arise then he was not who he claimed to be and his blood will not save us from our sins.

"Cast Out The Bondwoman And Her Son"

Nevertheless what saith the scripture? Cast out the bondwoman and her son: for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman.

Galatians 4:30

Abraham had two sons. Ishmael was the son of the bondwoman, Hagar, who represents the covenant of law and works. Isaac was the son of promise born to Sarah, who represents the covenant of grace. Although Sarah was the original wife of Abraham (actually the first and only wife), Hagar brought forth the first son! Even so, the covenant of grace in Christ is eternal and before the covenant of works; but the first man Adam was a son of works and flesh. When the son of promise is brought forth the child of works must be cast out. They cannot share the inheritance. Hagar (the law) and Ishmael

(my righteousness) must be cast out that Christ might have all the preeminence and our hope of redemption be in him alone!

Can you imagine the turmoil and conflict in Abraham's home while both of these sons lived there? Ishmael hated Isaac as works hates grace. Ishmael mocked Isaac as my righteousness rises up in conflict with Christ's righteousness. This is the reason why some do not have rest, peace and joy in their household of faith—they are trying to raise these boys together. They try to hold to Christ's righteousness and at the same time feed and nourish Ishmael, the son of law and human merit. There will be no real peace until the bondwoman of law and the son of human merit is disowned, disinherited and put out. Works and grace cannot share the same heart. Ishmael must not be allowed to have even a foot of ground, he must be forever deserted.

That which is born of flesh is flesh and can never share the inheritance with the son of promise; therefore he must not be kept around to mock and rob the house of its happiness. There will be no real assurance, peace and comfort in the heart until the Ishmael of human merit, righteousness and self-glory is deserted and forgotten.

"In my hands no price I bring
Simply to the cross of Christ I cling."

A Letter to a Brother Pastor

Dear Brother:

In a way I am sorry that you are exposed so early in your ministry to the hatred of unregenerate church members for the sovereign grace of God. In another way, I rejoice that this anger and opposition has risen, for it clearly declares that you have invaded the territory of Satan and you have stirred up his wrath. It also reveals that God has a people in your area whom he will call out through the preaching of the true gospel.

When we destroy the false hopes of religious men; when we expose their false refuges and their foundations of sand; when we attempt to give God all the glory for saving sinners; unsaved religionists will rise up in arms and try to silence us or persuade us to lay down the sword of the Lord and let them sleep on in peace. But the servant of the Lord knows that his gospel is the savour of life to some and the savour of death to others and men cannot remain neutral to the gospel of God's glory.

A group of religious people have no right to call themselves a church if they do not bow to Christ the head of the church, faithfully receive the whole counsel of God, and submit to the overseer of the church, God's faithful preacher. The issue is not Calvinism, and never has it been the issue. The conflict is over "Who is God?" "How does God save sinners?" And "Is salvation by grace alone or by grace and works?"

Stay where you are and preach the gospel of God's free grace. Study and spend much time in prayer. Ask God to give you a message every time you stand to preach that will glorify Christ, convict men of sin and bring sinners to the feet of King Jesus. Adopt a spirit of love toward all men, even your enemies; remember that except for the grace of God we, too, would cry "Crucify him" instead of "Crown him."

Too long church members have called preachers to run their pagan programs, and preach to them what they want to hear. Is there not a prophet who will call Herod "a fox," the Pharisees "whited sepulchers,"—and call on men to bow to the claims of Christ? I believe you are one and by God's grace I intend to be a prophet of God. If I don't have the courage to tell men the truth about God, about themselves and about salvation; I will turn in my papers and go fishing! God's preachers please no one but God! It is tough to stand alone, to be hated by people you're trying to help, to preach a message despised and discarded; but every man God has ever used was hated while he lived and praised after he is dead!

We might try to disguise the message and slip up on their blind side but we are fooling no one, not even ourselves. When the enemies of grace find out what you are saying, you'll discover that they don't

have a blind side; they hate the God of the Bible on every side. Preach the Word as it is to men as they are, and depend on the Holy Spirit to call out God's elect.

I pray for you,
Henry Mahan

The Sure And Only Foundation Of Faith

So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

Romans 10:17

Christ Jesus is the object of faith and the Word of God is the only sure foundation of faith. How do I know that God will be merciful to sinners through the merits of his dear Son? He tells me so in his Word! Take away the infallible scriptures and you have no reason or right to believe in God's mercy.

Believer's Baptism

And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.

Mark 16:15-16

For whatever reason men deny, discount, or make light of the immersion of believers as the public profession of salvation, I challenge them to do so using the Scriptures rather than their denominational fathers and their own human logic. The Scriptures require that every person who claims Christ as Lord and Savior should be immersed (Mark 16:16; Matt. 28:19; Acts 2:38; Acts 22:16; Acts 9:18). Read the accounts of conversion in the New Testament and you'll find that all of them publicly professed their faith in Christ

by following the Lord Jesus in baptism. You may sprinkle your infants and say that this ritual takes the place of circumcision. Paul was circumcised as an infant but when he became a believer in Christ he was baptized! Why be immersed when, like some of you, he had fulfilled the covenant ceremony? He was immersed to fulfill all righteousness, to be identified with Christ in his death, burial and resurrection, and to publicly confess his faith in the Lord Jesus! And, I might add, to obey the command of his Lord!

We will never hear the gospel of God until we are blessed with some preachers who "care not!" —preachers who *care not* what men say, who *care not* what men pay, who *care not* for tradition, who *care not* for position, but who *only* care for the glory of Christ.

Bought With A Price

For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.

1 Corinthians 6:20

Our people do not tithe—they give! I have found that there is something much better than law, duty and religious requirements; its love for Christ! I have found a much better motive for Christian giving than "Tithe and God will bless you;" it is "give because God has blessed you!" If the love of Christ does not constrain us, motivate us and encourage us to holiness, generosity, and compassion toward one another, all of the pledge cards, threats, and rules set forth are just so much wasted effort. One-tenth of what I have does not belong to Christ—all that I have and am belongs to my Lord—for I am bought with the price of his blood. I am not my own.

True Love

And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.

1 Corinthians 13:13

If we love a person for his beauty, do we really love him? No; for disease or age will soon destroy beauty, and our love will cease. If we love a person for his good sense or pleasing personality, do we really love him? No; for he can lose all good qualities without ceasing to be and our love would cease. But if we love a person for Christ's sake, because Christ dwells *in* us and because Christ has taught us the meaning of real love—we will love him as long as Christ lives which is forever!

What is a Good Hope?

God hath given us a good hope through grace.

2 Thessalonians 2:16

Being conceived in sin, shapen in iniquity, and brought forth from the womb speaking lies, it is the *hope* that I shall be born again by the Spirit of God and the Word of God and given the very life of God through faith. Being a sinner by choice and practice, having offended nod in thought, word, and deed, it is the *hope* that my sins shall be forgiven by the mercy of God and blotted out by the blood of Christ. Having no righteousness or merit of my own, for even my righteousnesses are filthy rags in his sight, it is the *hope* of being clothed in the beauty of holiness, and the righteousness of God accomplished by the obedience and merit of Christ. Being frail flesh and subject to temptations both within and without, from the flesh and the devil, it is the *hope* that by the grace of God I will continue in the faith of Christ, hold to my profession and persevere to the end; being able to declare with Paul, "*I have kept the faith.*" Being a dying man, for I shall go the way of all who have lived before, and as it is appointed unto men once to die, I shall die. It is the *hope* that, in

Christ, I shall have part in the first resurrection, and that this mortal shall put on immortality and this corruptible, incorruption having a desire to be with Christ and be like Christ it is the *hope* that I shall live eternally in his presence and be perfectly conformed to his blessed image.

"These eyes shall see him in that day,
The Lord that died for me;
And all my rising bones shall say
Lord, who is like to thee?

There shall I bathe my weary soul
In seas of Heavenly rest,
And not a wave of trouble roll
Across my peaceful breast."

The Whole Truth

*I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God
I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you.*

Acts 20:27

The old truth that Paul preached, that every bold servant of God preached in days gone by, is the truth that I must preach today, or else be false to my conscience and my Lord. I cannot shape and mold the truth or make it easier for rebels to digest. I dare not try to remove the offense of the cross or file down the rough edges to keep everybody happy. I am appalled when I hear or read sermons by preachers, who profess to believe the gospel of God's grace, and immediately recognize an effort on their part to camouflage or conceal the truth of God's sovereignty in salvation, his elective grace, the Holy Spirit's effectual work or the special and particular redemption of Christ for every believer! This is not only dishonesty but utter folly; for no sinner is going to savingly come to Christ until he forsakes his ways and his thoughts! A man can only be set free by knowing the truth not part-truth or half-truth. Paul set the example for me when he

declared "*I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God. I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you.*"

You may spend your efforts appeasing, shunning to declare plainly certain truth, and keeping back what you judge will offend, divide or run off today's church-goers, but to borrow the words of Luther, "Here I stand, I can do no other." If a certain truth is in the Word of God it will, by God's grace, be preached from this pulpit, whether men are ready to receive it, disposed to receive it, or apt to receive it. I expect God to bless this determination! He has and he will!

"When I stand before the throne
Dressed in beauty not my own,
When I see thee as thou art,
Love thee with un-sinning heart,
then Lord, shall I fully know,
not till then how much I owe."

Salvation

Salvation is not to "try God"—it is to know God. Salvation is not moral reformation—but regeneration. Salvation is not to decide for Christ—it is to receive Christ. Your salvation only surprises you. God purposed it.

Life In Christ

He that hath the Son hath life, he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.

1 John 5:12

I was greatly impressed, while reading Mr. Spurgeon this week, by a statement he made regarding those who spend most of their time trying to resolve the deep and mysterious theological questions. He said, "There is the puzzling problem concerning the origin of evil. I

am not so much concerned about how evil came into the world as about helping to get it out! Common sense seems to say: if there is a thief in the house, let us catch him, deal with him and get him out—after that we will try to find out how he got in! Our Lord did not come into the world to tell us where sin came from but by the sacrifice of himself to put it away."

It has for centuries been a great temptation to many talented men to spend their time studying, arguing and quarreling over sovereignty and responsibility, Sabbath days and church government, prophetic speculation and future events, when they would have been better employed and more greatly used of God in preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ. It certainly does not harm us to sharpen our minds, to look into the mysteries of God, to inquire into that which is written, revealed and unrevealed—but our powers are limited, our gifts are limited, and our time is limited. Let us sound a clear, positive note concerning that which God has made known without doubt, "*He that bath the Son hath life, he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.*" A man can be saved and not know whether he is pre, post or a-mil, but a man cannot be saved who does not know Christ. A man can be saved without a love for T.U.L.I.P., but he cannot be saved without a love for Christ. A man can be saved who refuses the lordship of elders but a man cannot be saved who refuses the Lordship of Christ. A man can be saved who does not enter the rest of your Sabbath, but a man cannot be saved who has not ceased from his labors, and entered the rest of Christ.

Sanctified

For by one offering He hath perfected forever them that are sanctified.

Hebrews 10:4

Sanctify them through thy truth: Thy Word is truth.

John 17:17

These seeming contradictions vanish when one understands that the first verse refers to the believer's standing in Christ before God! We are perfect because we are in Christ. The second verse refers to our life on earth in thought, walk, talk, and growth. We are sanctified in the one case and being sanctified in the other.

"Be Not Weary in Well-doing"

Galatians 6:9; 2 Thessalonians 3:13

If you ask me what I fear most for myself and for you—the answer may surprise many of you. I fear and tremble when I see spiritual indifference and weariness with the things of Christ, and when I detect a lukewarmness toward the gospel. The Word of God and spiritual literature goes unread. Worship services, Bible classes and fellowship with believers are neglected. Interest in others hearing the gospel and coming to Christ begins to wane. More attention is given to houses and lands, farms, jobs, entertainment, and fleshly pursuits, than to matters that concern the soul. Our knowledge of Christ becomes a thing settled instead of a relationship sought. The Christian race becomes the Christian rest. The spirit of humility, "*Less than the least*" gives way to pride, self-interest and hurt feelings. That sweetheart love for Christ and the things that relate to him begins to decline, and our comfort is no longer a person but a profession.

Brethren, if we grow weary in what little spiritual atmosphere we have here, we could never find happiness in the altogether holiness of heaven. If we tire of him who loved us and gave himself for us, when we hear it only three or four hours a week, how could we endure an endless song by every voice in heaven and earth singing his praises? If we had rather be in the company of the world than in that blessed company of the redeemed—then this will most likely be lost forever! Men do die as they live!

Bulletin Articles of Henry Mahan For the Year 1980

Hearts Are Naturally Hard

Men's hearts are spiritually hard. The world can win a man's heart; gold can win a man's heart; fame and popularity can win a man's heart; but there is not a minister living who can win a man's heart to God. We can reach the eye, the ear, and the head, but not the heart. But he can:

"Speak with that voice that wakes the dead
And bid the sinner rise;
And make the guilty conscience dread
The death that never dies."¹

Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father

*Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father:
(but) he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also.*

1 John 2:23

Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. There cannot be a Father without a Son nor a Son without a father. He that honors not the Son as the Son, honors not the Father.

¹ Spurgeon, Charles H. *The Power of the Holy Ghost*. Sermon no. 30. Vol. 1. New Park Street Pulpit. London: Passmore and Alabaster, 1855.

He is the very Christ and true Messiah spoken of by the prophets, typified in the sacrifices, and looked for by Old Testament saints. He is that Prophet, our great High Priest, and our sovereign King.

Anyone who denies Christ's true deity and true humanity, regardless of what other office, position, or praise he may give to Christ is an antichrist! To make Christ any less than he is, is to rob him of his glory.

If Jesus of Nazareth is not "*the Word made flesh*" [God in human flesh], then he is an imposter and all who worship him are idolaters! But, if he is "*very God of very God*," then all who reject him in that character are condemned.

But Something was Wrong!

Rolfe Barnard told about a young preacher who graduated from a Bible institute and began to preach the easy-believism gospel which he had he learned in school. His Bible teachers had the dispensations all arranged, prophecy all figured out, methods perfected to attract the biggest crowds, soul-winning procedures down pat, and "how to build a great church" neatly wrapped in a fool-proof package.

This young preacher made sure to use every gimmick, every tactic, and every invitation in his effort "to win men to Christ" and he was very successful! The people heard his easy-believism message and they accepted Jesus as their saviour from hell, as the supplier of their financial needs, and as the healer of their bodies. And, for good measure, they were told that they were eternally secure in their decision and could never be lost.

But something was wrong! The young man detected no fruit of the Spirit in his great congregation. He saw no love for Christ, the Word, or even for other people. There was no faithfulness in worship, giving, and witnessing unless they were motivated by threats, special programs, pledges, and contests. There was no hunger and thirst for righteousness, no meekness and humility; there was only divisions and strife!

In desperation, he resigned from this religious monstrosity and began all over again. But this time, instead of preaching easy-believism, he preached man's ruin and God's remedy in Christ. He declared salvation to be the gift and work of Christ. He demanded that men repent and receive Christ, not only as Saviour, but as the Sovereign Lord of their entire lives. And he called for unconditional surrender, total submission, and heart faith in Jesus Christ.

This way was difficult, as Christ said it would be. The message was offensive, as Christ said it would be. But the result was the miraculous calling out of bond-slaves and disciples to Christ and the young preacher's heart rejoiced in the presence and fellowship of his Lord.

Paul's Farewell to His Friends at Ephesus

Acts 20:18-35

Knowing they would see his face no more nor hear his voice proclaim the gospel of the Savior's grace again, he summed up his ministry among them as such:

1. (Vs. 18-19) "I have served the Lord with humility."

There is no other way to serve him who fills empty vessels and chooses the foolish to confound the wise. We are conscious of our own imperfections, aware our gifts are borrowed, and totally dependent on his power.

2. (Vs. 20-21) "I have kept back nothing profitable unto you."

I have declared two essential things; "Repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ."

3. (Vs. 27) "I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God."

Neither fear of men, nor desire for praise or position, nor covetousness have ever led me to leave out portions of Scripture which are offensive to natural men.

4. (Vs. 32) "Now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the Word of his grace."

It is God who saved you, not me! Your faith stands not in the wisdom of men but in the Lord Jesus Christ. Be not followers of men but of Christ. "Desire the sincere milk of the Word that you may grow thereby" (1 Pet. 2:2).

5. (Vs. 33) "I have coveted no man's silver, gold, or apparel."

"Those who preach the gospel are to live by the gospel" (1 Cor. 9:14). They must not be influenced nor motivated by fleshly cares or carnal prizes. Your gifts and provisions are appreciated but not sought.

6. (Vs. 35) "I have showed you how that you ought to support the weak."

Pray for one another, encourage the weary, feed the hungry, restore the fallen, cheer the faint, visit the sick. Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

A Hiding Place from the Wind and a Shelter in the Storm

Thanks be unto God who causeth us to always triumph in Christ, our Lord.

2 Corinthians 3:14

I creep under my Lord's wings in the great storms of life and the waters cannot reach me. Let fools laugh the laughter of fools. Let them mock me. Let them bid the weeping one to sing them one of the

songs of Zion. We can sing; we can sing in the winter storm; we can sing in the day of falling leaves; we can sing in the summer's scorching sun.

We can sing for our victory is won; our victory is Christ. No created power on earth or in hell can mar our Lord's work so no invisible force can spoil our song. No trial within or trial without can destroy our union with him.

"For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus, our Lord" (Rom. 8:38-39).

Though our hearts be keenly aware of our sins; though our minds endure a conflict over natural evil; though our eyes be filled with tears of repentance; though dangers are within and without; "*Thanks be unto God who causeth us to always triumph in Christ, our Lord*" (2 Cor. 3:14).

"Content with beholding His face,
My all to His pleasure resigned;
No changes of season or place,
Would make any change in my mind:

While blest with a sense of His love,
A palace a toy would appear;
And prisons would palaces prove,
If Jesus would dwell with me there."²

² Newton, John. How Tedious and Tasteless the Hours. *Olney Hymns*. London: W. Oliver, 1779.

A Faithful Saying

This is a faithful [true] saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.

1 Timothy 1:15

There is a lifetime of preaching in this verse but there are two points of great importance which are sometimes overlooked; the truth of the saying and the worth of it! To discover the truth of the gospel is to find true peace of mind and to discover the worth of the gospel is to find true peace of heart.

1. The truth of it. *"And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son"* (1 Jn. 5:11). I believe the record that God hath given concerning Christ; therefore, I am not troubled and confused by other voices or other claims. Let God be true and every man a liar. The apostle summed it up this way; *"To whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life"* (Jn. 6:68). My mind is satisfied!

2. The worth of it. If I have Christ, I need nothing else, either in this life or in the life to come. I am complete in him, redeemed in him, accepted in him, and already seated with him in glory. I have ceased from all my labors and efforts to secure divine favor. His redemptive work is not only effectual but is sufficient for the greatest sinner, the poorest sinner, and the weakest sinner. *"My grace is sufficient for thee"* (2 Cor. 12:9). Does this not leave your heart in a state of rest and peace? If not, then you have not yet discovered the worth of his great atonement.

A General Principle

It is a general principle that a blessing is about to come from God when we are moved to seek him with all our hearts. Men do not, by nature, long for nor seek God. So if one is aware of his great need and

impressed to seek mercy in Christ, he can be sure the blessing is already designed.

By Grace Alone

For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast.

Ephesians 2:8-9

"By grace ye are saved." There is no present salvation except that which begins and ends with grace! No man can preach or possess a present salvation except those who preach and believe that we are saved by grace alone! The work is finished! Any other way of salvation is dependent on the sinner and it will fail.

The Dog Follows His Master

So long as two men are walking together, you cannot tell which one of them the dog belongs to. But let the two men part company and it then becomes evident; the dog will follow his master! The dog does not hesitate, debate, or remain undecided; he quickly follows the one he loves.

Where Christ and men separate; where the Word of God and the traditions of men divide; where the ways of God and ways of the flesh part, the servant of Christ does not hesitate, debate, or remain undecided; he follows Christ, whom he loves, regardless of the cost.

The master may go to a simple cottage, a meal of dry bread, and a lonesome existence while his companion enjoys all the luxuries of the world. But the faithful dog cares little for these things so long as he is with his master.

"Content with beholding His face,

My all to His pleasure resigned;
No changes of season or place,
Would make any change in my mind;

While blest with a sense of His love,
A palace a toy would appear;
And prisons would palaces prove.
If Jesus would dwell with me there."³

The Law Fulfilled in Love

For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.

Galatians 5:14

The Scriptures overwhelm us with this word love:

"By this shall all men know the ye are my disciples, if you love one another" (Jn. 13:35).

"He that loveth not knoweth not God;" (1 Jn. 4:8).

"...but the greatest of these is love" (1 Cor. 13:13).

"If I have not love, I am nothing" (1 Cor. 13:2).

"This is my commandment, that ye love one another as I have loved you" (Jn. 15:12)

If this miracle of grace; this fruit of the Spirit; this nature of regeneration is a reality to me—an experience of my heart—then Christ becomes my beloved Lord; duties become pleasures; ordinances become desires; enemies become friends; and suppression of self for the good of all and the glory of God becomes a joy!

If the love of God is shed abroad in my heart by his Holy Spirit, then I am able to accept trials and afflictions from the hand of my heavenly Father with grace and submission; able to live in peace with

³ Newton, John. How Tedious and Tasteless the Hours. *Olney Hymns*. London: W. Oliver, 1779.

all men; able to forgive misunderstandings; able to overlook the infirmities of others; and able to build a happy relationship with the family of God.

Love begets trust, confidence, and hope. But where love is absent Satan is able to get the advantage and sow his seed of division, doubt, fear, jealousy, envy, and strife. Nothing renders a man more unlike Christ and more like Satan than to despise love and show instead a spirit of wrath and hatred.

Love is the sweetest bud that blows,
Its beauty never dies;
On earth among the saints it grows,
And ripens in the skies.⁴

Of all the joys we mortals know,
Jesus, thy love exceeds the rest;
Love, the best blessing here below,
And nearest image of the blest.⁵

Four Important Facts

1. There can be no saving benefit by Christ without union with Christ.

“My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you,” (Gal. 4:19). “To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory” (Col. 1:27).

2. There can be no union with Christ except by faith. It is by his Spirit that he takes hold of us and it is by faith that we lay hold of him. He is in us by his Spirit; we are in him by faith.

3. There can be no saving faith accomplished apart from the preaching of the gospel:

⁴ Swain, Joseph. Love is the Sweetest Bud That Blows. *Walworth Hymns*. London, 1792.

⁵ Watts, Isaac. Of All the Joys That Mortals Know. *Plain Psalmody*. London, 1800

“For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?” (Rom. 10:13-15).

4. All the preaching in the world cannot reveal sin, reveal Christ, or bring the sinner to repentance and faith, unless accompanied by the effectual work of the Holy Spirit:

“No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets, ‘And they shall be all taught of God.’ Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me” (John 6:44-45).

Three Things Self-righteousness Can Never Do

There are three things that self-righteousness can never do:

1. It can never honor the divine law
2. It can never satisfy divine justice
3. It can never quiet a guilty conscience

Jesus, thy blood and righteousness
My beauty are, my glorious dress:
'Midst flaming worlds, in these arrayed,
With joy shall I lift up my head.

When from the dust of death I rise
To claim my mansion in the skies,
Even then, this shall be all my plea,
Jesus hath lived, hath died for me.⁶

⁶ Von Zinzendorf, Nikolaus L. Jesu, Thy Blood and Righteousness. *Christi Blut und Gerechtigkeit*, 1739. Trans. John Wesley. *Hymns and Sacred Poems*. London, 1742

When Water is Best

It is in the desert where water tastes the sweetest; when the lips are parched, the mouth dry, and the throat like cotton. It is then that every drop is precious and none is wasted. When it seems life hangs on no more than a drop, it's then that a man will part with his fortune for some water to quench his thirst.

And, likewise, it is in the grip of trial where the Water of life tastes best. When the soul is dry from many a windy day. When the muscle of the human spirit is strained past another try and despair threatens to snuff away the last ray of hope. Oh, how precious then are the words of the Saviour!

It is then that no excuse is given for absence when he speaks; the weary mind will give its last thought just to hear one more sweet syllable from the Saviour's lips. Not a single word falls unheeded into space.

The thirsty soul will leave every other pursuit just to lay hold upon but a sip of this life-giving Water. Would it not do us well to know a little more of that desert where men count precious the words of Christ?

Give Up and Gain!

Oh! soul, weary of your many troubles, give up and give yourself into your Saviour's hand. He waits your resisting strength to die.

There his strong arm lies beneath you. There he will bear you up. There, resting only upon his might and riding only upon his merits, will you soar to heights only dreamed of, but the best not yet known.

So give up and gain! When you are faint, he shall lift you up!

The Woman's Place

Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence. For Adam was first formed, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression. Notwithstanding she shall be saved in childbearing, if they continue in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety.

I Timothy 2:11-15

Paul clearly teaches that women are not to lead in prayer, to teach, or to assume authority over the men in the public worship and services of the church, but they are to learn in silence (I Cor. 14:34-35). It is equally clear that women are to pray, teach their children, and instruct other women in the gospel of Christ in their homes.

The apostle gives two reasons why women are to be subject to men.

1. "Adam was first created, then Eve."

Man's headship is established in creation (I Cor. 11:3; I Cor. 11:8-9). The woman, by divine rule, is in subjection to her husband, and any attempt by her to assume the part of head, leader, or instructor is to overturn God's order.

2. "Adam was not deceived; but the woman being deceived, was in the transgression."

Adam was not deceived, what he did in the garden was to please his wife. Eve confesses that the serpent beguiled her; thereby, suggesting her inferiority to the man in strength, spiritual knowledge, wisdom, and understanding. She was already under her husband's rule before the fall but her subjection to the man is more greatly imposed as a punishment for her part in the transgression (Gen. 3:16).

God's blessings are upon women in their true sphere; that of motherhood, home-life, and godliness. But none can expect his mercies while living in rebellion against his revealed Word. God did not create two chiefs of equal power and authority but he gave to man a precious companion to be loved, led, and protected by her head as he follows the example of his Head, who loved his bride and gave himself for her (Eph. 5:23-25).

"Oh Jesus Christ, most holy!
Head of the church, thy bride!
Oh may in each believer,
Thy love be magnified."⁷

Holding Faith and a Good Conscience

This charge I commit unto thee, son Timothy, according to the prophecies which went before on thee, that thou by them mightest war a good warfare; holding faith, and a good conscience; which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck.

1 Timothy 1:18-19

Paul exhorts Timothy to "*war a good warfare, holding faith and a good conscience.*" I understand the word *faith* here to be a general term meaning sound doctrine and the word *conscience* to deal with honesty and integrity. The chief things demanded of those who would preach, teach, or minister the gospel of Christ are these two:

1. That he should hold firmly and boldly to the pure truth of the gospel of God's grace and mercy in Christ Jesus, our Lord. We shall not - we must not - compromise the gospel of his glory. If righteousness comes by works, laws, or merit, then Christ died in vain. All of grace; all in Christ, is our message.

⁷ Von Zinzendorf, Nicolaus L. "O Jesus Christ, Most Holy." *Our Own Hymn Book*. Charles Spurgeon. Pasadena: Pilgrim Publications, 1975.

2. That he shall minister this gospel with a good conscience, serving the Lord God with a sincere and perfect heart. We preach not ourselves but Christ; we seek not yours but you; we covet no man's possessions, praise, or approval. "I know how to be abased and how to abound" (Phil. 4:12). Where these are found, all of the others will follow in due time.

The Importance of This Fellowship to Me

1. I am a believer, a son of God in Christ Jesus. God has been pleased to reveal his Son in me. He is my life, my hope, and my refuge. I live by his grace and grow on his Word. And so I must constantly be where I can hear his Word in power, in the Holy Ghost, and in assurance. I must be fed on the truth!

2. I love Christ, he is precious to me, and so all that is of Christ (his church, his ordinances, and his people) is precious to me. I not only feel that I must be identified with them in this world but it's also my greatest enjoyment to fellowship with believers around the person of Christ. I am just not happy or content around those who do not know or rejoice in him. Where the people of Christ go, I will go; where they lodge, I will lodge; where they die, I will die, and there I will be buried. I will not be interested by whatever temptation there may arise to leave them.

3. I am a frail human. I am subject to fall and subject to attacks from the world, the flesh, and the devil. I am not perfect and I have not arrived. I fear indifference, sin, and coldness of heart. Therefore, I need to be exhorted daily, I need to be encouraged, I need to be comforted, and I need to be rebuked. The world and its liberal preacher who cries "peace, peace" and the religionist will not do these things for me; only the true pastor and the true believer (who know my nature and need) can be all these things to me.

4. I am a witness. Christ said, "Ye shall be my witnesses." I am concerned for the salvation of my family, friends, and people around the world; therefore, I desire to bring my family and friends under the

Word of truth and help to send pastors, evangelists, preachers, and missionaries to other towns and countries to preach Christ.

My Father, I thank thee for this fellowship of believers.
I pray you will make them a blessing to me
And will make me a blessing to them!

Believers Represent the Lord

Several years ago I applied for a home improvement loan at a local bank. I did not deal with the president of the bank or an officer of the bank but with one of the employees. This particular employee was quite rude and unkind to me causing me to cancel my account at that bank and move to another. The only contact I had with the bank was with this very poor representative but it was enough to discourage me from going there again.

You and I represent our Lord, the gospel of the Lord Jesus, and the church of the first-born. The only contact some people have with the church and kingdom of God is through us. What kind of impression do we leave on them? What idea of Christianity do we convey to them?

I wonder if they do not sometimes walk away offended, disappointed, and resolved not to inquire any further into our faith or listen to our message. I realize that we are frail creatures, subject to all of the limitations of the flesh, but we need to set a watch on our lips, control our tempers, and put forth a special effort to adorn the gospel of his grace. If we endure persecution for the gospel's sake, well and good, but not if we bring it on ourselves by our own faults!

Repent and Be Baptized

Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.

Acts 2:38

C. H. Spurgeon once closed a sermon with these words; "I call upon every man here to do what Christ bids him. I call upon you, first of all, to prove that you believe in Christ by being baptized. 'He that believeth in Christ and is baptized shall be saved.' The first proof that you believe in Christ is to be given by yielding to the much despised ordinance of believers' baptism, and then, having done that, going on to the other means of which I have spoken. Oh! I charge you by your soul's salvation, neglect nothing Christ commands, however trivial it may seem to your reason. Whatever he saith unto you, do it, for only by a child-like obedience to every bidding of Christ can you expect to have the promise fulfilled, "They that trust in him shall be saved."⁸

Would not this be a fitting close for every message directed to the unsaved? Instead, we call on men to pray the sinner's prayer, to come forward, to pray through at an altar, and neglect the very command of Christ which says, "*believe and be baptized;*" the words of Peter in Acts 2:38 to "*repent and be baptized;*" or the words of Ananias in Acts 22:16 to "*arise and be baptized.*"

While I know that baptism has been misused, misplaced, and misapplied, it is still the Scriptural way to confess faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

“Unto thy death baptized,
We own with thee we died;
With thee, our Life, we're risen,
And shall be glorified.”⁹

⁸ Spurgeon, Charles H. Fruitless Faith. London. *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*. Vol. 60. London: Passmore and Alabaster, 1914. Print. Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

⁹ Deck, James George. "Around Thy Grave, Lord Jesus." *Our Own Hymn-Book*. London: Passmore and Alabaster, 1883. N. pag. Print. Compiled by Charles Spurgeon

“Baptized in the Savior's name,
We'll walk as sons of God:
Baptized in thee, with joy we claim,
The merits of thy blood.”¹⁰

Wait Upon the Lord

Even though trouble is laid upon you, it is not as heavy as it could be nor as severe as they would be if the Lord was pleased to deal with you in justice rather than mercy. Therefore, *"Wait upon the Lord for they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary, and they shall walk and not faint"* (Isa. 40:31).

Faithfulness to The Lord

Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.

1 Corinthians 4:2

A local church is a company of brothers and sisters. We are one family; one life is ours; one love is ours; and one objective (to know and glorify the Lord Jesus) is ours. This is the comfort and strength of all: that we are all one in Christ. We cannot properly minister the gospel of Christ without one another. The eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you."

Spurgeon once said, "I don't know which renders the greater service—the man who preaches or the man who prays, but I know this, we can do better without the voice than without the heart of prayer!"

¹⁰ Bowly, Mary. *Our Own Hymn-Book*. London: Passmore and Alabaster, 1883. Print. Compiled by Charles Spurgeon

Blessed and happy is that assembly of redeemed people, brought together and baptized into one body by his Spirit, whose love for the Lord Jesus and for one another enables them to sing with one voice, pray with one heart, walk in one direction, and worship with one Spirit! Where each member realizes the importance of his presence, his prayers, his support, and his co-operation. Where Christ is Lord and all others are servants! Where the will of Christ is preeminent and all other wills and desires are in subjection! Where there are no young and old, rich and poor, educated and uneducated, but only Christ, who is all and in all.

"Moreover it is required in stewards that a man be found faithful" (I Cor. 4:2). It is easier to be faithful in that which is seen than in that which is unseen; that which is at the front rather than at the rear. But neither is more or less important than the other. It is that service which seems most commonplace among men which is often the most precious to our Lord. If I can do what I do for the glory of God, then it will bless both me and his church.

Love and Trust: The Ties That Bind

And above all things, put on love, which binds everything together in ideal harmony.

Colossians 3:14

The relationship which exists between true believers in the church of the Lord Jesus Christ and between that of the pastor and the people within the family of God, is one that cannot be understood by the natural man or by the unsaved religionist. The carnal church must have strings attached to the pastor to regulate his comings and goings: he is assigned a vacation time, so many outside meetings, pulpit and visitation duties, set times for business meetings, certain quorums at which he must be present, things which must be voted on and dutifully announced a set number of days in advance...even members are not allowed the freedom to designate gifts! By-laws, constitutions, and rules of order are printed and distributed so that the pastor dare not act without the approval of the deacons and the deacons dare not

act without the approval of the congregation and the congregation dare not act without the due process and vote of the monthly business meeting.

All of this has come about because these people do not love and do not trust one another! The pastor who loves Christ, the church, and lost souls will not need rules and regulations of men to motivate him or keep him in line. Deacons who love Christ and one another do not need to be assigned duties, serve limited terms, and be consulted on every matter. Church members who love Christ and one another and trust their God-given leaders do not require a written report of every move made, every cent spent, and every work undertaken. Their relationship is one of fervent love and complete trust. Each member is allowed to exercise his own gift, act as a free steward of his own grace, and engage in the ministry God has given him without interference and forced control by others. Yet, all together fulfill the will of God and none are complete without the others. Regenerated men understand this and you waste your time trying to explain it to the rest.

I Am the Chief of Sinners

This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.

1 Timothy 1:15

When the prodigal came home, he did not hang up his old rags as trophies, as some do when they give their testimonies, bragging about how sinful they used to be. I'm sure the old rags of his former shame were burned and forgotten and his attention given to the beautiful robe furnished by his father.

I am sorry to say that some insist on making a glory out of their shame and like to talk of their past sinful ways, usually without a blush on their cheeks or a tear in their eyes. As Spurgeon once said:

"In some circles he is treated as a hero who can prove that he has been the greatest rascal."¹¹

Our former sins are things to be confessed to God in secret, not displayed in public as an old soldier shows his medals. We do not glorify God in this regard, but only serve to feed the lust of the fleshly-minded.

"I am the chief of sinners" is sufficient public acknowledgement of our past and present sins for, even then, how little do we know just how true that is!

Biblical Evangelism

For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living.

Romans 14:9

Is the whole concept of present-day evangelism wrong? I believe that it is! Present-day evangelism is based on the fact that death is near for all and, after death, there is a hell to shun and a heaven to gain. If we don't want to go to hell, we must find a way to make peace with God, thereby gaining an entrance into this wonderful paradise called Heaven. The way to attain this coveted prize in some circles is to come to the front of the place of worship and say that you believe in God, and accept Jesus Christ as your personal savior. In some circles, you must come to an altar and look for an experience or an emotional upheaval. In some circles, the way is to join the group and pay your expected dues. And in other circles, you reform your life and live by certain principles. But the ultimate goal of them all is the same; to stay out of hell and to go to heaven.

But true biblical evangelism says that God has turned this world over to the Lord Jesus Christ, who purchased the crown rights at Calvary. "He died that he might be Lord of the dead and the living"

¹¹ Spurgeon, Charles H. Sermon No. 2127 Love's Competition. *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*. Vol. 36. London: Passmore and Alabaster, 1890. Print.

(Rom. 14:9). "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name" (Ph. 2:9). True biblical evangelism commands men to bow to the claims of Jesus Christ and to receive him as Lord and believe that God hath raised him from the dead and exalted him.

Whatever he is pleased to do with me, he is my Lord. If I have an interest in his atonement, his grace, and his mercy, I shall be a trophy of his eternal grace; if not, I shall honor his justice; but, either way, he is still the Lord! Oh! that I may win Christ and be found in him.

Six Arguments for Holiness of Life

1 John 2:29-3:6

The following verses all have a two-fold theme; believers will live godly in this present world and they will love one another. Faith is always connected with obedience and love.

1. 1 John 2:29 - If we know that Christ our Lord is righteous then we know that those who are begotten of him will be righteous. To be born of God is to have the nature of God, the grace of God, and the presence of Christ formed in us, causing us to be like him.

2. 1 John 3:1 - The amazing, eternal, infinite love which God has bestowed on us, making us sons of God, is a privilege that exceeds all others. How can we then serve self and sin in the face of such love and grace?

3. 1 John 3:3 - We are going to be like Christ and every person who now has this hope in Christ of being like Christ will make every effort to be like Christ *now*. It is foolish for a man to say, "I want to be like Christ someday...but not now."

4. 1 John 3:4 - Every person who practices sin as a course of life, excuses and justifies a life of flesh, and lives unrestrained, is lawless and a transgressor of the law. But no true believer can ever find peace

outside of the fellowship of God. If we say we have fellowship with him and walk in darkness, we lie.

5. 1 John 3:5 - Christ was sent to take away sin and, in Christ, the believer has no sin. But the main thought of this verse is that Christ did not come to put away the penalty of sin only but also the power of sin over his sheep. Sin shall not reign over you. We are, therefore, servants of Christ and not servants of Satan or sin.

6. 1 John 3:6 - Those who know Christ and abide in him hate sin in themselves, and they hate sin about them. They do not deliberately practice a life of sin because, to continue in sin, is to give clear evidence that one has not truly seen his glory or ever known him for "*if any man be in Christ he is a new creature*" (2 Cor. 5:17).

Growing in Grace

But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever. Amen.

2 Peter 3:18

Someone said:

"The Lord beloved is joy begun;
the Lord adored is joy growing;
the Lord beloved is joy matured."¹²

I know that every sinner saved by the grace of our Lord Jesus remains always in the school of faith and is never fully satisfied with his efforts in prayer to, or worship of, the Lord of Glory. But, oh! to

¹² This is a variation on a phrase originally rendered, "A deity beloved is joy begun; a deity adored is joy advanced; a deity beloved is joy matured," by Joseph Kinghorn of Norwich, quoting a Dr. Young, in his *Memoir*, published 1855, and later quoted by Charles Spurgeon in his sermon no. 778 *Plain Words with the Careless*, delivered October 13th, 1867.

Kinghorn, Joseph. *Joseph Kinghorn of Norwich: A Memoir*. San Bernadino: Ulan, Reprinted 2012. Print.

Spurgeon, Charles H. *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*. Sermon No. 778 *Plain Words with the Careless*. Vol. 13. London: Passmore and Alabaster, 1867. Print.

be enabled to pray and worship by the Spirit of God, and to love Christ with a singleness of heart so that Christ only is my life, my light, and my love!

Then I would not fear death, for death would only usher me into his presence. I would not know darkness, for even the darkness would be light about me. I would not experience despair or disappointment, for his loving presence and tender care would be sufficient.

To love him as he loves me would make everyday a cheerful walk with him and, every night a sweet rest in his arms. To believe is to live; to worship is to grow; to love is to enter into his rest and peace.

The Problem and The Solution

We won't make much headway in finding a solution if we don't understand the problem. A cure is not likely to be found if we have no knowledge of the disease. In the matter of salvation, the problem is man's sin; the solution is God's grace. The disease is moral depravity and spiritual inability; the remedy is God's mercy in Christ.

If a man is near-sighted, he only needs corrective glasses, but if he is blind, he needs the miracle of sight! If a man is sick, he only needs medicinal aid, but if he is dead, he needs the miracle of life! If man has only strayed from the way, he needs directions, but if he is completely lost, he needs to be found!

So here is the question that must be settled by preachers and people alike: "What happened in the garden?" When one feels obliged to come to some conclusions on the subjects of election, irresistible grace, and particular redemption it would be wise for him to first determine the condition of the sinner who is to be saved.

He is dead in sins, he needs to be resurrected and that by the purpose and power of the God of life. If fallen man still has his moral ability and power of choice, then let us wait for him to choose and seek God, but if fallen man loves darkness and will not come to Christ, then Christ must love and come to him.

Children of Love

Now before the feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end.

John 13:1

God showed his power in making us creatures, but he showed his love in making us sons. A man may give thanks that God has made him a man rather than a beast, but how much more we ought to praise his glorious name for making us children of love rather than leaving us in our state of sin. When I think of what and where I could be, my heart overflows with gratitude to my Redeemer!

Read This Carefully!

Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.

1 John 4:1

The churches and religious organizations in our land are quite impressive. They occupy a very influential position in our society. No official or public person will dare to speak disrespectfully or criticize any form of religion today. True believers can often be heard to say, "Well, they do say some good things and who am I to judge?" And even the agnostic will speak softly of today's religion, lest the wrath of God come upon them.

Where would we be today if Luther, Calvin, Zwingle, and the Reformers had adopted this position? Our Lord said, "*Ye have made my house a den of thieves.*" He called out false preachers as wolves in sheep's clothing who, like their father Satan, have transformed themselves into ministers of righteousness.

Let us not be deceived by the subtlety of Satan or by the so-called zeal and sincerity of today's religious hucksters; *"if they speak not according to the law and the prophets it is because there is no light in them."* To expose a religious thief is no more than to expose any other common thief. To expose a religious quack is no more than to expose a medical quack. Don't be awed by the fact that they claim the power of God to be on their side. Examine all that you hear by the Word of God and don't be afraid to *"try the spirits whether they be of God."*

Challenge my message or any man's message in the Spirit of God and by the Word of God! You never have to worry about incurring the wrath of God when you are sincerely seeking him and his glory!

We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord

For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake.

2 Corinthians 4:5

The apostle describes in this verse the ministry of every true preacher; we preach Christ, not ourselves! We point you to Christ and not to us, our wisdom, or our organization. With that in mind, when can it be said of us that we are preaching ourselves and not Christ?

1. When we preach what we think instead of preaching what God says.
2. When we preach what men want to hear instead of what men ought to hear.
3. When we seek to please men by taking the offense out of the cross and glory in the flesh.

4. When we set ourselves up as spiritual authorities over the consciences of our hearers, judging their salvation by their relationship with us and our requirements.

5. When we try to impress men with our wisdom, knowledge, or piety.

6. When we become ambitious for personal recognition and begin to boast of numbers and converts, and attach our names to buildings, organizations, monuments, and movements.

7. When we fear public opinion and court the friendship and approval of carnal men at the expense of truth.

8. When we allow our hearers to entertain any hope of salvation except by the sovereign grace of God through the merits of Jesus Christ.

9. When we preach for any other reason than the glory of Jesus Christ and the eternal good of our hearers.

All Flesh Is Grass

The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain: And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it. The voice said, Cry. And he said, What shall I cry? All flesh is grass, and all the goodness thereof is as the flower of the field: The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: because the spirit of the LORD bloweth upon it: surely the people is grass. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever. O Zion, that bringest good tidings, get thee up into the high mountain; O Jerusalem, that bringest good tidings, lift up thy voice with strength; lift it up, be not afraid; say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God!

Isaiah 40:3-9

The two-fold message of evangelism is "*All flesh is grass!*" and "*Behold your God!*" This is the message which strips man of all his glory, as Job was when he said, "*He hath stripped me of my glory, and taken the crown from my head*" (Job 19:9).

It is also the message which gives all the glory for all things to the One to whom all glory belongs; our Lord Jesus Christ! The results of preaching man's inability and God's sovereignty will be a sense of the awful presence of God breaking the proud hearts of guilty men and women and bringing them to the feet of Christ for mercy.

Gone will be the voice of the proud sinner who stands in the church and debates whether or not he will patronize the Lord of Glory; whether or not he will accept Jesus; whether or not he will let God have his way; instead, we will hear men and women cry:

“Depths of mercy! Can there be
Mercy still reserved for me?”

Can my God His wrath forbear,
Me, the chief of sinner's spare?"¹³

Grace Alone

*To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name
whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.*

Acts 10:43

I can understand how men and women, who have never read or heard the Word of God preached, can look to and depend on their works and self-righteousness to make them acceptable before God; for such things seem logical to the natural mind which knows nothing of God, sin, righteousness, and divine holiness. But I cannot understand how any person who has read the Scriptures can fail to see that salvation is by grace alone through the merits and death of the Lord Jesus Christ.

God Forbid

*But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our
Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and
I unto the world.*

Galatians 6:14

Every religious person is going to glory in something. He will glory in his pedigree, his morality, his gifts, his office, his revelations, or his sufferings. But with a strong, "*God forbid*," Paul made a clean sweep of all these grounds for boasting declaring, "I will glory only in the cross of Christ."

You know, without me having to tell you, that he wasn't referring to a tree, a necklace, or a symbol on a church steeple, but to the great

¹³ Wesley, Charles. *Depths of Mercy. Hymns and Sacred Poems*. London: 1742.

atonement of our Lord. He was referring to the substitutionary, vicarious suffering of Christ, as revealed in the glorious gospel, which came from the cross.

How I wish that today's religion would totally abandon the superstitious use of crosses and begin to once again preach the true cross of Christ, which is the gospel of his glory!

That Which God Burns into the Heart

The best commentator on the Word of God is its Author, and the best way to learn the meaning of scripture is to go to that Author in prayer. Often I am staggered by scripture and I will make use of the commentaries and books by various authors but, at the same time, I also pray, "Lord, open this scripture to me for your glory and for my good."

Whatever men teach you, men can *unteach* you! But that which God burns into my heart is mine forever!

Love

Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing. Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away.

1 Corinthians 13:1-8

Love is:

Slow to suspect; quick to trust
Slow to condemn; quick to justify
Slow to expose; quick to shield
Slow to demand; quick to give
Slow to resent; quick to forgive
Slow to belittle; quick to appreciate

When Is A Man Truly Saved

But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace.

Galatians 1:15

Someone asked, "When is a man truly saved?" Well, my friend, to be saved is more than just believing in one God; the demons believe even that! It is more than just trembling under the preaching of the Word; Felix did that! It is more than holding an office in the church; Judas did that! It is more than submitting to the ordinance of baptism; Simon Magus did that! It is more than weeping over sin; Esau did that! It is more than just respecting the preacher; Herod did that! It is more than keeping company with outstanding believers; Demas did that!

To be saved is to know God and Jesus Christ, whom he hath sent. It is to be a new creature in Christ Jesus, regenerated and converted by the power of God. It is to believe on Christ with the heart and confess Christ with the mouth. It is a miracle of deliverance accomplished through the preaching of the gospel and the work of God's Spirit.

So when will a man be saved?

1. He will be saved when it pleases the Lord (Gal. 1:15).
2. He will be saved when he bows to, and comes under the authority of, the Lord Jesus! (Rom. 10:9-10.)
3. He will be saved when he sees the redemptive glory of God in the face of Christ Jesus. (II Cor. 4:5-6).
4. He will be saved when he can see the guilt of his sins before God, and the sufficiency there is in Christ's life and death to provide him a perfect righteousness, and a just atonement (II Cor. 5:21).

I Like What you are Saying

"I like what you are saying," was the reply of a friend at the door Sunday night. I had expressed my joy over his presence with us and his reply of "I like what you are saying" could not have pleased me more.

It was not "I like *you*" or "I like *the music*" or "I like *the atmosphere*" or "I feel it's *my duty* to attend" but "I like the *gospel* you preach."

The gospel that is good news to the needy and glad tidings to the troubled will find itself welcome with the Lord's sheep. You pray for me and come to the services, and I will seek the Lord's message for us! If it is God's truth and you are God's children, then you too will like what I am *saying*.

If you know these things, happy are ye if you do them

So after he had washed their feet, and had taken his garments, and was set down again, he said unto them, Know ye what I have done to you? Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him. If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.

John 13:12-17

Our Lord had just washed the disciple's feet. He had taught them the truth of full cleansing and daily cleansing when he said, "*he that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit: and ye are clean, but not all*" (Judas was not clean).

By washing their feet, he had symbolically taught them that they were to lay aside contentions regarding personal greatness, distinctions, and preeminence. Each one was to become a servant of all, willing to take the lowest place, with no one striving for recognition or praise. *"If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet."*

"If you know these things" (if you understand and have learned anything of what the Lord has revealed here) then happy shall you be if you do these things. Exemplify in your life and conduct the things you have learned.

Two-fold happiness - true and complete happiness - stands forth here: happy is the man to whom God will not charge sin and happy is the man whose heart is knit together in true love with the Lord's family. His sins are pardoned and he is free from fleshly ambitions and covetousness. He has nothing to fear and nothing to prove!

He rests in the Lord's pardon and enjoys the Lord's peace in all that he does or is called to do. He can both ride forth to battle or stay home to water the horses with the same dedication. He can preach and he can pray for those who preach. He can teach and he can listen to others teach. He can preside over the table and he can serve the food. He can rejoice with those who rejoice and he can weep with those who weep. He does all things alike with the same devotion and enthusiasm, for he is the Lord's bond-slave.

I Know Whom I Have Believed

For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.

2 Timothy 1:12

A number of well-meaning people (I suppose they mean well) have put a lot of emphasis on *when* a person is saved. They insist that one should be able to pinpoint the time and place when they were delivered from darkness to the kingdom of God's dear Son.

Some may be able, like the apostle Paul, to recall a Damascus road experience. Others, like the apostle Peter, may recall a more drawn out process; the initial meeting and first confessions, but then struggles to learn, impulsive claims, even doubts and denials. But all these things led up to a love feast at the sea of Tiberias where he exclaimed, "*Lord, you know that I love you.*"

But whether the conversion is short and memorable or long and eventful, the goal of faith and seeking should always and only be "to win Christ and be found in him; to know him and the power of his resurrection."

The time, the place, or even the experience itself, all fade into the background in the presence of *our blessed Lord!* I'm more interested in *who* you know more than *when* you met him!

Blessed is the man whose delight is in the Word of God

Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night.

Psalm 1:1-2

He delights to read the Word, to hear the Word preached, and to meditate upon the Word day and night. The Word of God is bread for the believer, giving strength to his faith and hope! Meditation is his very character, for he knows that “as a man thinketh in his heart, so is he!”

After hearing an old saint quote the 23rd Psalm, a famous orator was asked to explain the difference in style. He replied, "I know the Psalm; he knows the *Shepherd*."¹⁴

Faith Comes by Hearing

So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

Romans 10:17

The preaching of the gospel of Christ is *the* soul-saving ordinance. It is not through the eye but rather through the ear that salvation comes to men. "*Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the Word of God.*"

In every age God has raised up men to faithfully proclaim his gospel of grace. Elijah may ascend but his mantle fell to Elisha. Paul may die but not until Timothy is trained and on the field.

¹⁴ Brown, Hugh B. *The Quest*, Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1961, pp. 335-36

The true preacher of God's gospel has a rightful claim on your attention. If God has sent him, men should - and must - hear him for he who preaches Christ crucified has life flowing from his lips. And he who hears will find life flowing in his heart and soul. God has chosen "by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe" (1 Cor. 1:21).

Love to God and Others

If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?

1 John 4:20

John is saying here that all who truly love the living God also love those who are in the image of God, and that which is identified with God here and now on the earth. How foolish it would then be to claim to love God while holding in contempt those things which are God's—the very people he has made for himself and by whom he is pleased to reveal and glorify himself.

You have never seen God and this leaves you free to imagine whatever you will about God. This allows you to form and make a character which pleases you and then call it "god." "Thou thoughtest I was altogether such an one as thyself," said the Lord in Psalm 50:21.

But the living God is revealed in his own dear Son who walked on this earth. He is revealed in his Word, his providence, his creation, and yes, in his church! The people of God (frail and weak though they may be) are a part of God himself.

He loves them, redeems them, indwells them, and uses them to accomplish his purpose and glory. So to not love them and to refuse to be identified with them in their fellowship and worship is to declare loud and clear that we really do not know and love God. "*He that despiseth, despiseth not man, but God, who hath also given unto us his Holy Spirit.*" (1 Thess. 4:8).

Therefore, the religious recluse who can find no one who agrees with him, no one who pleases him, no one and nothing to enjoy, and no fellowship in which to delight, is not really in love with God at all - he's just in love with himself. He is settled in self-righteousness and in under a false concept of God. That which he sees and hates is that which God made. That church which he shuns is God's church. That providence in which he finds no delight is God's providence by which God works his divine will.

Christ said, "*In as much as ye did it not unto the least of these my brethren, ye did it not unto me*" (Mt. 25:45). Christ and his church are one! John is simply telling us, in no uncertain terms, that it is impossible to love one and not love the other.

Bulletin Articles of Henry Mahan For the Year 1981

A New Year!

I'm sure that none of us look back over 1980 with complete satisfaction but we can look back with *thanksgiving*. The Lord blessed this church in so many ways too numerous to list. But a few special blessings need to be recalled.

Bro. Jay Wimberly came to serve as our Assistant Pastor, the Preachers Class was started, we began a radio broadcast over WCKY which reaches over half the nation with the gospel of grace, and we began putting our Bible School lessons in booklet form, making them available to other churches.

I rejoice in the opportunities that the Lord has given us to minister the gospel all over the world. I do not know what 1981 has in store for us. I'm sure that no one can fully regard a new year with indifference, but my heart can at least rest knowing that our Father is sovereign over all things, and will make known his way and will to us as the days of 1981 unfold.

So we will put our hands and our hearts into those things he has given us to do for his glory! And we will, by his grace, be faithful to the task at hand and be always willing to move into other areas as his Spirit leads. As the hymn writer said:

"Ready to go, ready to stay
Ready my place to fill,
Ready for service lowly or great,

Ready *my place* to fill."¹⁵

The Glory of God

But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.

Galatians 6:14

It is far too easy for a church—any church—to be off on side roads, causing them to miss the main work that Christ has given it to do. And what is that work the Lord of the church has commissioned? Whatever it is, let it be that which occupies our minds, our hearts, our all!

At the center of all the work that the Lord's church does is *the glory of God*. Any other glory is sin and is the enemy of the cross of Christ. When such sin is discovered, it must be abandoned with all haste. Therefore, an eye must be kept alert to its invasion and it must be avoided at all cost. Whatever a church does, it must be all and only for God's glory.

Flowing from that center (the glory of God) is the Lord's great commission to his church to *declare the gospel* (Matt. 28:19-20). He has kept our instruction very simple: *worship God and preach his gospel!*

Brother Barnard said that we don't need to *explain* the gospel...we need to *proclaim* the gospel! Now, there is our work: the gospel and the proclamation of the gospel!

Whatever a church may do that does not have preaching the gospel at the heart of it, should be dropped so they won't be distracted from busying themselves with the main work! Brethren, we have no

¹⁵ Tillman, Charlie D. *Ready*. 1903. Also variously attributed to A.C. Palmer or Anonymous (S.E.L.). 1903.

other assignment! If the gospel is not our work, then our work has no right to exist in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ!

Let us take caution, fellow believers in Christ, that we do not busy ourselves in that which neither worships Christ nor preaches his gospel.

A community does not need to know a church for its buildings, crowds, or even charitable deeds. But it most certainly needs to know a church for the gospel it preaches!

The people of a community may know a church's name, fellowship, or doctrine, and yet be lost. But what a difference it would make if the community knew the church's Christ!

The Lord once said to Mary and Joseph, "Didn't you know I would be about my Father's business?" (Luke 2:49). Oh, may we be found in the work of preaching the gospel!

Act on the Promises and Commandments of Christ

Dear Mrs. Jones,

I received your letter in which you said, "I realize that I am a sinner, I do not lay claim to any goodness before God. I can say with David, "My sins are ever before me." I want to be forgiven of my sins, I want to be saved, and I want to live for God with peace in my heart and the knowledge that Christ is my Savior. I realize that *salvation is of the Lord* but I also believe that something is expected of me in this matter—what is it?"

You are absolutely right, something is not only expected but required of you! If what you have stated is really the true feelings of your heart, and I believe it is, then I urge you to willingly, openly and sincerely *act on the promises and commandments of Christ*.

1. *Believe* the Word of God in regard to his mercy in Christ. "He that believeth on the Son of God hath eternal life."

2. *Receive* Christ Jesus as your Prophet, Priest, and King. "To as many as received him to them gave he the privilege to become the sons of God."

3. *Commit* your past, present, and future to the Lord Jesus. "Cast all your care upon him - he careth for you."

4. "*Come to Christ*" - as you are. "All the fitness he requireth is to feel your need of him." Leave your idols and look to the Redeemer.

5. *Confess Christ* publicly before your family and friends by following him in believers' baptism. He said, "If you confess me before men, I will confess you before my Father."

6. *Worship Christ* with others like yourself, who lay no claim to merit, goodness, or works, but who find in him all wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. Our only claim to holiness is his *holiness!* We are not without sin except *in him!* We look to Christ and find in him our rest. "Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life" and sink or swim I go to him.

Sincerely,
Henry Mahan

The Heart of the Gospel

And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission.

Hebrew 9:22

If I have any apology to make in reference to preaching about the blood of the Lord Jesus, it is that I don't preach it as often as I should. If a church is successful in removing the blood from their songs, prayers, and sermons, they have only succeeded in removing the

heart of the gospel, the *power* of the gospel, and the *hope* of the gospel. Without the shed blood of Christ there is no forgiveness, no atonement, and no way to God for the sinner.

"Dear dying Lamb, thy precious blood
Shall never lose its power;
Till all the ransomed church of God
Be saved to sin no more."¹⁶

The Kingdom of God

In the kingdom of God:

the way up is down;
the way to live is to die;
the way to strength is weakness;
to be wise is to become a fool;
to be clothed in His righteousness is to be stripped of my
own;
to receive is to give;
and to reign is to serve.

If God does not turn my affections, interest, and love away from this world, then I will perish with the world.

Grace Experienced

Salvation by grace is a doctrine that's true; a doctrine that must be preached, and a doctrine that should be believed. But, like the doctrine of God's existence, just believing that salvation is of the Lord and by his grace does not save! This grace must be experienced in the heart and received by faith!

¹⁶ Cowper, William. *Praise for the Fountain Opened or There Is a Fountain*. Conyer's Collection of Psalms and Hymns. London: 1772

I'll never get across a river by simply believing that a certain bridge can take me across or that others have been successful in using the bridge. I must experience the bridge's deliverance and power for myself. Depravity is not a doctrine to the redeemed but it's an actual experience. So too is Christ the Saviour not just a doctrine to the redeemed but a person the redeemed encounter so that the redeemed can all say, "He is the One who has delivered us!"

Conflict but not Condemnation

Psalm 51

All true believers struggle against sin and rejoice in complete justification at the same time. All true believers are in a state of conflict but not condemnation. Men of old wrestled with the nature of sin but they also rejoiced in forgiveness.

David said, "My sins are ever before me," but he also said, "In God is my salvation and my glory."

Job said, "I abhor myself," but he also said, "I know that my Redeemer liveth."

Isaiah said, "I am a man of unclean lips," but he also said, "by his stripes we are healed."

Romans 7 and 8 have been, is, and will be our experience as long as we live on earth.

Truth and Love

2 John

Two words are prominent throughout the second epistle of John; *truth* and *love*. These two words are used nine times in the first six verses alone.

Truth without love is cold, stern, and even cruel. Sound doctrine without a loving heart is not only useless but can do great harm. But it is also true that a form of love without truth is uncertain, unsettled, and unprofitable.

True faith lays hold upon both truth and love.

The Preacher Whom God Delights to Bless

There are some men who would like to preach the gospel, serve a church, and even glorify God, so long as it can be done with due regard to their own comfort, interests, and on the field of their choosing. Spurgeon once said, "We are content to follow the Lord provided we are recognized, cared for, and content. We will give God the glory after we have sucked the juice out of it, but we must have the orange first."¹⁷

This attitude God will neither bless nor endure. He is not going to have a man's leftovers. He will have all the glory or none at all. If a man seeks to serve and honor himself and only looks out for the comfort and care of his own personal interests, *God will not use that man.*

The hymn writer put it this way:

"Ready to go, ready to stay,
Ready my place to fill.
Ready for service lowly or great,
ready to do His will!"¹⁸

A man (or woman) who desires to be used of God must be persuaded that what he is going to do is for the glory of God, without

¹⁷ Spurgeon, Charles H. *The Soul-Winner*. Sermon #2 *Qualifications for Soul-Winning: Godward*. London: Passmore and Alabaster, 1903. Print.

¹⁸ Tillman, Charlie D. *Ready*. 1903. Various Attributed to A.C. Palmer or Anonymous (S.E.L.).

any other consideration, and he must labor and work from no other motive.

I know that we are human; that every human passion, family care and concern, desire for praise, honor, and comfort still lives in us, but we're also bond-slaves, and a bond-slave belongs to his Master lock, stock, and barrel. He does not choose his own service, place of service, or length of service; this is the Master's prerogative.

If two angels came to earth, one to rule a nation for the glory of Christ, and one to sweep the streets for the glory of Christ, it would make little difference to them who did which task.

"Must I be carried to the skies
On flowery beds of ease?
While others fought to win the prize
And sailed through bloody seas?"¹⁹

Preach with Love

A wise old man once said, "Gospel duties are to be performed with a gospel attitude and temper."

Therefore I endeavor to *preach* with love, *give* willingly and cheerfully, *worship* with simplicity, *pray* with sincerity, *sing* with thanksgiving, and *live* with integrity. The form of such things, without heart, is shameful.

¹⁹ Watts, Isaac. *Am I a Soldier of the Cross*. 1709. Written by Dr. Watts to follow a sermon on the text "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong" (1 Cor. 16:13).

With the Mouth Confession is Made unto Salvation

For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

Romans 10:10

This confession of Christ embraces the whole life. It is not only saying I believe in Christ, declaring in baptism my identification with Christ, but daily confessing by act, deed, and words my love for him and the grace of God which, by his Spirit, dwells in my soul.

One tree does not make a forest and one profession of faith is not that confession which is unto salvation. Faith without works, love, and perseverance is a snare of the devil, from which we must flee.

Mexico Trip 1981

The Lord gave me the privilege of preaching the gospel in nine different villages while I was in Mexico. I also spoke to the Native Preacher's School for two hours each Monday. Walter Groover translated for me. I spoke in Tekal, where Jose is pastor, Thabchibechen, where Gustavous is pastor, Seye, where Rogelio is pastor, Merida, where Alphonso is pastor, Techol, where Geruacio is pastor, Yobain, where Rutilio is pastor, Calcalchen, where Gilberto is pastor, and in Teye, where Maximo is pastor. All of these villages have church buildings and good congregations. I spoke to about 60 people in the backyard of Felipe's parents. This is a new village Walter has been visiting lately. The preachers' class has about 25 regular students. Several of the ladies were permitted to attend while I was there speaking.

Many of the native preachers are traveling to other villages holding meetings in homes and yards. We plan to purchase a motor bike for some who have been walking six hours one way to three villages.

I can't tell you how encouraged I am about Bro. Groover's work in the Yucatan. Interest and enthusiasm in the churches is high and the Native Preacher's School is proving to be the center point of the ministry there. All of these churches are self-supporting, independent, Baptist churches holding services nearly every night under the leadership of the local pastors who study in the school. Bro. Groover visits them on a regular basis while also seeking to open new missions.

Walter needs additional support and the school fund needs your gifts. Inflation in Mexico is unbelievable, much greater than here. The cost of almost everything is one third higher than in our country. Pray for all of our missionaries and include your designated gifts as you feel led.

By the Grace of God

But by the grace of God I am what I am.

1 Corinthians 15:10

If I am elect my election is of grace.

If I am redeemed my redemption is of grace.

If I am called I am called by grace.

If I am preserved I am preserved by grace.

Whatever there is in me that is acceptable or gives my soul any comfort must be all of grace and grace alone.

John Newton used to say that for a believer in sovereign grace to be proud was the most inconsistent thing in the world, for by his own profession he owns that he is what he is, knows what he knows, and has what he has only by the grace of God.

Perhaps we have worshipped with some friend, prayed with him, or even heard him preach and teach the Word. And he seemed to be a man of strong faith, deep conviction, and devout life. Then, all of a

sudden, he is gone from the church, from the gospel, and from the fellowship of the saints. What do you feel at such a time? You feel a sadness and a broken heart for him as well as a fear for yourself as you are led to say with Paul, "*But by the grace of God I am what I am.*"

Or perhaps you say with John Newton:

"When any turn from Zion's way,
Alas, what numbers do!
I think I hear the Savior say,
Will you forsake me too?"

Ah, Lord with such a heart as mine,
Unless You hold me fast,
I know I must, I shall decline,
And prove like them at last."²⁰

Let us all be warned against pride of heart and spirit and be ever reminded by the Word and our own experience that, "But by the grace of God we are what we are."

If Salvation is all of Grace, Why Not me?

So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy.

Romans 9:16

God does not save any man because there is anything in that man that deserves salvation but he saves sinners because he delights to show mercy. The reason for redemption is found in him, not in us. His mercy planned salvation, his grace chose us, his love gave Christ to redeem us, and his power keeps us. "So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy."

²⁰ Newton, John. *When Any Turn From Zion's Way (alt. Will You Also Go Away?)*. Olney Hymns. Vol. 1. No. 115. London: 1779

If you have been looking for some reason in yourself why God should show mercy to you, you're looking in vain! If you have weighed your works and considered your contributions to the kingdom in order to merit God's favor, you'll only be disappointed in the end! The Lord saves whomsoever he will. His own declaration to Moses is, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion."

Now then, if it be God's will to save sinners who have no good in them, those who do not merit or deserve his love; if he delights to show mercy to all who call upon him, why should he not save me and you? I certainly qualify as the chief of sinners. If God is pleased to provide a full Saviour, I can provide an empty sinner. If Christ died for the ungodly then he certainly died for me! If Christ is the Friend of sinners, I lay claim to his friendship. This religion that requires merit and personal righteousness offers me no hope. But God's free grace to the undeserving, God's sovereign mercy to the ill-deserving, and Christ's effectual atonement for the helpless bring me to his Throne of Grace crying, "God be merciful to me, the sinner."

If all the fitness he requires is to feel your need of him, then *why not me?*

"Come ye sinners poor and needy
Weak and wounded by the fall:
Jesus ready stands to save you-
Full of pity, love and power."²¹

Support of the Ministry

I am grateful for your faithful and generous support of the ministry of this church. The Lord has been pleased to open so many doors for us to preach the gospel to the world by television, tapes, radio, missionaries, Bible conferences, printed material, and through the pastor, assistant pastor and our young ministers preaching in other areas. Your prayers for these efforts are coveted and your faithful support is deeply appreciated. When we cannot bear the glad tidings

²¹ Hart, Joseph. *Come Ye Sinners*. Hymns Composed on Various Subjects. London: 1759.

ourselves, we can provide the material needs for those who do, and I can encourage you to believe that the person who provides for the messenger is as important in the body of Christ as the messenger.

It's the Little Things

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith.

Galatians 5:22

It's often said, "It's the little things that count." It is certain that little things do have a way of revealing either the absence or presence of saving grace.

Consideration, kindness, thoughtfulness, forgiveness, words of appreciation, and an attitude of concern for others justifies our profession of faith much more effectively than our creeds and confessions. It is true that Christ alone is our salvation and sanctification, and it is equally true that where the Spirit of Christ dwells, the fruit of the Spirit will be manifested.

Better to Not Be Born at All

I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins.

John 8:24

Christ said, "If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins." Better to die any death than to die in your sins. If you die in your sins, you will rise in your sins, you will stand at the judgment in your sins, and you will spend eternity in your sins! Better not to be born at all than to die in your sins!

When is a Man Saved?

But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace.

Galatians 1:15

Some say we are saved when we are chosen to salvation by God's eternal grace. Some say a person is saved when sprinkled as an infant, or when he makes a profession of faith, or when he is baptized, or when he learns the doctrine of grace. Some say we are not saved at all until we actually get to heaven. But what does the Scripture say?

1. A man is saved *when it pleases the Lord* (Gal. 1:15). Salvation is of the Lord. It pleased God to make you his people, it pleased God to make Christ your surety, it pleased God to bruise him, and it pleased God to reveal his Son in you! It is God who quickens, regenerates, calls, and justifies. We are born of God.

2. A man is saved *when he comes under the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ* (Rom. 10:9-10). The Bible knows nothing of a doormat named Jesus or a fire escape called Christ. But it does teach the Lordship of Jesus Christ. The Bible knows nothing of a salvation which allows a man to have Christ as his savior and yet refuse to bow to him as Lord.

3. A man is saved *when he sees the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ* (II Cor. 4:6). Job asked "How can a man be just with God?" "How can God be just and justify the ungodly?" Where can righteousness and peace meet? Where can mercy and truth kiss one another? Only at the cross. We see in the death of Christ both the wisdom and the power of God and his *redemptive* glory!

4. A man is saved when walking in the light of Divine revelation, *he receives and confesses Jesus Christ to be his Lord and savior* (John 1:2; Matt. 10:32-33). The Lord has no secret disciples. He that believeth shall neither be ashamed nor be put to shame.

"I'm not ashamed to own my Lord
Or to defend His cause.

Maintain the honor of His Word
The glory of His cross."²²

The Lordship of Christ

These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also, saying that there is another king: one Jesus!

Acts 17:6-7

It was as Lord and King that he was *rejected!* "We will not have this man reign over us."

It was as Lord and King that he was brought before Pilate and *accused!* "He said that he himself is Christ, the King."

It was as Lord and King that he was *mocked by the soldiers!* "Hail, King of the Jews."

This is *the charge* written over his cross! "Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews."

It was the issue then and it is the issue now! "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth *Jesus to be Lord* and believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." The burning question is not who or what is your Saviour, but *who is your Lord and King?*

It is the royal claims of King Jesus that the gospel presses upon men. If he is not Lord of your life, he is not the Saviour of your soul!

²² Watts, Isaac. *I'm Not Ashamed to Own My Lord*. Hymns and Spiritual Songs. London: 1707.

How to Avoid Times of Depression

But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.

Jude 1:20-21

Someone asked, "How can I avoid these times of depression, indifference, and bad attitude toward others?"

First, there is no perfection in the flesh! While we do not approve of our infirmities, failures, evil thoughts, or backslidings, we are, nevertheless, aware of their source; the flesh. And, because of that, we are also aware of the fact that this conflict and warfare will be with us until death. However, the next time you are plagued with coldness of spirit, prolonged bad attitude, and a worldly spirit, check and see if you are not neglecting the means of grace and your fellowship with Christ.

I find that when I am walking with Christ in sweet communion, frequently engaging in private prayer, participating in worship services and Bible study, and reading the Word of God, it is easier to forgive others, easier to overcome pride, envy, and jealousy, and I am less interested in material things and more interested in that which is of the Spirit. But if I neglect these means of grace I suddenly become more interested in those things which I really despise and begin acting in a way that is not glorifying to God.

If we will learn the power of his precious blood, dwell in him, feed upon his Word, and seek to occupy our thoughts with his gracious presence, then we will see our tempers controlled, our hearts filled with love for him and others, and our feet and hands swift to do works of faith and labors of love.

The Importance of Faith in Christ

So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief.

Hebrews 3:19

There is nothing more important than true faith in the Lord Jesus. There is no sin greater than unbelief. Faith is the saving grace and unbelief is the damning sin. "They could not enter in because of unbelief."

The free grace of God is the *first and moving cause* of our justification. The obedience and death of our Lord Jesus is the *meritorious cause* of our justification. Faith is the *instrumental cause* of our justification! "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, he that believeth not shall be damned."

Faith in *its proper place* is as necessary as the death of Christ. Paul said "Christ *in you* the hope of glory," not Christ in the manger, not Christ on the cross, nor even Christ in heaven, but Christ *in you*!

Even though Christ has come in the flesh, died, and rose again yet, if we do not believe on him, we shall die in our sins (John 8:24).

The Greatest Sin of All

Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.

Luke 18:10-14

Why did this man go to hell? Was he unjust? He said he wasn't! Was he an extortioner? He said he wasn't! Was he an adulterer? He said he wasn't!

Then why did he perish? Because of the greatest sin of all -the source of all sin—*pride* and *self-righteousness*! He thanked God he was not as other men are, but now finds himself cast out while those other men are saved.

We have examples of murderers, harlots, and great offenders being brought to Christ and forgiven but not one *self-righteous man*!

Sovereign Mercy

In general, it can be said that every great revival to date has been marked by the preaching of *sovereign mercy*. This was Paul's message, Augustine's message, Calvin's message, Luther's message, Owens message, Whitefield's message, Edward's message, Spurgeon's message, and Barnard's message. The preaching of

sovereign grace breaks up the fallow ground, shuts the sinner's mouth, exalts the Lord God, and glorifies the Lord Jesus.

Today the seed is cast everywhere but on good ground! The urgent need is for preaching that will prepare the ground for the seed or the heart for the good news. We must preach the character of God, the character of men, the sufficiency of Christ, and the efficacy of the Spirit's work.

But beware, my preacher friend, for I warn you that the truth that is least acceptable to the flesh is the very truth that God blesses to the saving of sinners. It is just here that the preacher must make his choice: shall I preach to please men, or shall I preach the message of a sovereign Christ to a helpless, hopeless world? For it cannot be both!

Forgiveness Is Sweet

An old Italian proverb says, "Revenge is sweet." The Mexicans find great satisfaction in "getting even." But neither the Italians or Mexicans have a corner on this sin—we all are acquainted with the feeling.

"Revenge is sweet" but not to the man who knows the Redeemer, for he says, "How can I talk about vengeance upon my neighbor when Christ has dealt in mercy with me and put away all my sins?"

No sir, *forgiveness is sweet!* Just as God delights to show mercy those who know God rejoice to demonstrate his grace.

All of Grace

Do you remember John Newton's story about three wonders in heaven? The first wonder was that we will see those in heaven we did not expect to see. The second wonder was that we will miss so many that we did expect to see. And the third wonder will be to find ourselves there conformed to his image.

When I hear professing believers sitting in judgment on other believers because they are not perfect, or because they are not quite as holy as we think we are, I have to think that, surely, if they knew what they are, what sin dwells in them, how they received what they have, then they wouldn't be so hard on others.

If there is anything that can cure our pride, it is to discover that salvation is *all of grace*. Let us continually sing:

“Oh, to grace how great a debtor
Daily I'm constrained to be!”²³

A Present Help

God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.

Psalm 46:1

If you are in difficulty, commit your troubles to him. His grace is amply sufficient for every trial that can arise.

You have committed your soul to Christ, then surely, you can trust him with the rest for "*He is a very present help in time of trouble.*"

²³ Robinson, Robert. *Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing*. A Collection of Hymns Used by the Church of Christ in Angel Alley, Bishopgate. London: 1759.

Man at His Best State

Behold, thou hast made my days as an handbreadth; and mine age is as nothing before thee: verily every man at his best state is altogether vanity. Selah.

Psalm 39:5

My brethren, when I preach our guilt, sinfulness, and utter depravity, I am not speaking as man speaks or seeing us as man sees. Compared to the ways of the flesh and in relationship to the general conduct of this world, most of you are to be commended for your conduct and conversation! But, before the holiness, righteousness, and glory of God, who can but feel his total wretchedness and corruption?

We are not to be judged by the opinions of men, but by the perfect Law of God. In his sight man *at his best state* is altogether vanity. A man will see his sinfulness only to the degree that he sees God's holiness (Isa. 6:1-5).

Faith is a Heart Work

My son, give me thine heart, and let thine eyes observe my ways.

Proverbs 23:26

Worship, praise, prayer, and faith are all a *heart work*, more than simply participating in ceremonies, rituals of religion, and the chanting of fundamental words and facts.

"The sacrifices of God are a *broken heart* and contrite spirit" (Ps. 51:17).

Inward Grace

But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His.

Romans 8:9

Inward grace and faith will always produce *outward* works of love and kindness. It is impossible to have one without the other.

Grace within produces grace without.
Love within is manifested in outward works.
Faith within is reflected in outward obedience.
Hope within leads to outward peace.
Gratitude within makes men generous to others.

Let us fear having a dead-letter, orthodox form of religion, denying the life-changing power of his grace.

Conversion

Conversion is not changing churches, changing denominations, changing doctrines, or changing lifestyles: conversion is a change of *masters*!

How Can I Give Up the Gospel?

I could sooner die a thousand deaths than renounce the gospel I preach. How can we give up the gospel? It is our life, our soul, our all.

The Lord has created such a communion between the soul and the truth that the truth must hold us and we must hold the truth even to the point of death.

Prosperity

Many can bear persecution without complaint but, when it comes to *prosperity*, there are very few who have the grace to resist its vanities and snares.

Happy is the man who can truthfully say, "None of these things move me."

A True Minister of the Gospel

A true minister of the gospel is a creation of God. It is not in the power of the church or any man to make a minister. God alone *ordains* ministers and all that the church can do is *recognize* them (Acts 13:2-3).

We can encourage them, support them, pray for them, and advise them as God gives us wisdom, but God must call them, anoint them, and equip them for his divine service!

Times of Danger

There are critical times of danger for the believer: times of *prosperity*; times of *poverty*; times of *honor and recognition*; and times of *fleshly temptation*. Satan knows where we are vulnerable!

Continue in the Faith

I may be a strong believer in election but if I do not believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, I will perish.

I may believe in the security of the elect but if I do not continue in the faith, I will hear him say, "I never knew you: depart from me."

Bulletin Articles of Henry Mahan For the Year 1982

A Story About Judson

I read in Spurgeon's "Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit" of a story about Adoniram Judson, the American missionary to Burma. He had passed through untold hardships and great trials during his over thirty years of preaching the gospel in that country. He returned to America and was to speak before a large crowd gathered in his honor. He rose at the end of the usual service, with every eye on him and every ear tuned to hear his message, and spoke of the precious Saviour. He spoke of Christ our surety; of Christ our Righteousness; of Christ our Sacrifice; and of Christ our Mediator. His message rang clear on the merits of the blood of Christ.

On the way to the hotel that night, the young man who accompanied him said to Judson, "The people were disappointed tonight. They wondered why you did not speak of something else." "Why were they disappointed?" Judson replied. "What did they want to hear? I presented to the best of my ability the most interesting subject in the world." The young man replied, "But they wanted something different, a story!" "Well, I gave them the most thrilling story that can be told." "They had heard that before. They wanted to hear something new and exciting from the man who had spent thirty years in the jungles."

Judson stopped, faced his companion, and said, "I am glad that they now have it to say that a man coming from the Antipodes had nothing better or more wonderful to tell than the wonderful story of Christ's love for sinners, and his precious blood that maketh atonement for our souls. My business is to preach the gospel of Jesus

Christ, and when I can speak at all, I dare not trifle with my commission. When I looked upon those people tonight and remembered where I should next meet them, how could I stand up and furnish food for vain curiosity? How could I tickle their fancy with amusing stories? That is not what Christ meant by preaching the gospel. And then how could I hereafter meet his fearful charge, 'I gave you one opportunity to tell them of *me*, but you spent it in describing your own adventures!'"

Spurgeon added, "If Judson could find nothing better to tell after thirty years in Burma, I will just go back also to this old subject, which is always new and fresh; the precious blood of Christ."

We are Ambassadors for CHRIST

Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.

2 Corinthians 5:20

We preachers need to listen to our own sermons often and determine whether or not we are doing what we were sent to do! Are we being, as Paul said, "ambassadors for *Christ*?"

Paul also said, "I preach Christ—I determine to know nothing but Christ." There is a great temptation to preach *about* the gospel instead of preaching the gospel. There is a tendency to preach the doctrines of election, atonement, and second-coming, sending our hearers away convinced of the truth of the doctrines but not in love with, and in awe of, the Son!

Christ is the end of all preaching. "We are chosen in him." All things are in Christ. "Christ in you"—that is the hope of glory!

Ye Must Be Born Again

John 3:1-6

Why must a man be born again? There was a time when man's soul could make spiritual music to God, but that was before sin broke the strings. No music can be made now until the strings are restored and the instrument is put in tune again. A ship must have a rudder to guide it in a straight line; even so, a man cannot walk the straight line of holiness until the principles of righteousness are in his heart.

How can a man act in a divine manner until he has received the divine nature? A beast cannot act like a man without the nature of a man; even so, a sinner cannot act like a holy man unless he partakes of the nature of Christ and has a holy image created within him.

A man must be born again. He must become a new creature and receive a holy nature to perform the duties of a Christian, or enjoy the privileges of faith. "*Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?*" The stream will be the same as the fountain. If the heart be right, the motives and deeds will be right.

Woe Is Unto Me, If I Preach Not The Gospel.

I Corinthians 9:16

I will soon be 56 years old. I have been in the ministry for 34 years and pastor of the same church for 31 of those years. We have evidence that God has been pleased to bless our efforts to *make Christ known*. How many years we have left to labor together in this ministry, only God knows!

I have been doing some heart searching these past two weeks, and I am more determined than ever before to "know nothing among you save Jesus Christ and him crucified." There are all sorts of

temptations from the enemy of God to depart from the simplicity of Christ; to deal with current events, intellectual and interesting sidelines, prophecy, and religious themes! But, "He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father which hath sent him."

Let us be about the Father's business, and that business is to "preach Christ and him crucified." My heart is fixed and I challenge my brethren in the ministry; Let's go back to Bethel, where the ladder led to the throne, where the voice of God spoke to our hearts in covenant promises, where the waters were sweet, and where every message rang with ruin, redemption, and regeneration. God, blessed it then and he will bless it again!

Faith

For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not.

Romans 7:18

The strongest faith is subject at times to doubts, shaking, and trouble just as the greatest ships are tossed by the waves and the brightest stars are sometimes covered with the clouds. Therefore, believers, if at times you are *not* sensible of any growth of faith, do *not* conclude that you have no faith.

Faith may be in the heart when it is not seen in the act. There may be life in the root of the tree even when there are no leaves, blossoms, or fruit on the tree. The leaves and fruit will be seen in the spring and summer.

Our confidence is not in this flesh but in the Lord Jesus Christ. If my assurance of an interest in Christ rested on my feelings, I would have little or no assurance, "for in my flesh dwelleth *no* good thing."

Alone with God

Old Ambrose once said, "I am never less alone than when I am alone; for then I can enjoy the presence of the Lord most freely, fully, and sweetly, without interruption."

A lack of private devotion and meditation will lead to dead, formal duties. A man's public prayer, worship, and preaching is best when he has spent much time in private devotion.

It is impossible to speak to men in the name of God if we have not pleaded with God in the cause of men.

In Whom You Trusted

In whom YE ALSO TRUSTED after that ye heard the Word of truth, the gospel of your salvation.

2 Timothy 1:12

Where there is God's purpose, there will be a *fulfillment* of that purpose.

Where there is an election, there will be a Divine *call*.

Where there is a redemptive work accomplished by Christ, there will be someone *redeemed*. Where there is an invitation, there will be a *response*.

Where there is a bridegroom, there will be a willing *bride*!

I cannot conceive of our Lord being disappointed or defeated in anything that he decrees or wills. The sheep come willingly but they will come; he hath ordained it! (*Psalms 110:3*).

Love and Faith

A genuine love for others is an evidence of redemption. It is not the *cause* but the *sign*, for no one sincerely loves others except he is regenerated by the Spirit of God.

The love of natural men is self-love. I verily believe that the two strongest evidences of true salvation are love and perseverance in faith.

Oh, for a heart to love and a faith that will not fail.

Happy Homes Don't Just Happen – They Are Made!

Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it.

Ephesians 5:24-25

Paul speaks to wives and says, "*Submit yourselves to your husbands.*" This subjection is not only in body but in heart and spirit. Wives should love their husbands, think well of their husbands, speak respectfully of them, as well as respectfully to them, take care of family matters according to the husband's will, imitate him in that which is good, and bear patiently that which is not so agreeable. Paul adds, "*As unto the Lord.*" The Lord has designated authority in the husband and commands obedience to and respect for that authority. To the husbands the apostle simply says, "*Love your wives.*"

This is still and always will be the key to any happy relationship! Because Christ loved us, he gave himself for us. Because we love Christ, his yoke is easy and his burden is light. If a husband loves his wife, he will show affection for her, delight in her, seek her happiness and contentment, speak kindly to her, conceal her faults, and prefer

her above his parents, children, and friends! You don't need to go to a marriage counselor to solve your differences; you need to go to the cross and learn the meaning of *love*.

Love in Deed and Truth

My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth.

I John 3:18

The thing that troubles me most, when it comes to the validity of our profession of Christ, is that we talk, preach, and sing of love, mercy, and forgiveness but then, when the opportunity comes for us to love the unlovely, forgive the offender, and bind up the wounded heart, we join the circle of Pharisees, clutching our stones, ready to wound and maim.

A profession that does not produce is a false profession.

The Gospel Minister is to be Esteemed

And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labor among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. And be at peace among yourselves.

I Thessalonians 5:12-13

Paul speaks here of faithful pastors and preachers. He exhorts believers *to know them*.

1. To recognize, acknowledge, appreciate, and respect them for what they are: ministers of God.

2. Make yourselves known to them, converse freely and honestly with them, so that they may know the state of your souls and speak a word in season.

3. Esteem them, holding them in high and affectionate regard, in appreciation for their faithful work among you.

4. Be at peace among yourselves in regard to the ministry. Do not find fault, disagree, or take offense over trivial matters. To do so is to make the minister's work more difficult and hinders the unity and growth of the church.

These men *labor among you*. No honor or respect is due the lazy, idle preachers who neglect prayer, study, and the faithful preaching of the Word.

They *preside over you* in the Lord. They are not lords, but leaders, by the authority of Christ.

They *admonish you*. They teach, warn, reprove, and exhort you in the Word of God, and it is in this respect that they are to be obeyed and followed.

It is the solemn responsibility of *the voice* to speak the truth in Christ. And it is the solemn responsibility of *the ear* to hear, *the heart* to believe, and *the feet* to walk in paths of righteousness and faith.

With What Measure You Deal to Others

Take heed what ye hear: with what measure ye mete.

Mark 4:24

"May life always be as beautiful for you as you make it for others!"

Let us read that brief word over and over until it is burned into our hearts. The poet's pen simply repeats the Master's promise, "With what measure you deal out to others it shall be dealt to you."

The Good Providence of God

Murmuring against the providence of God is a great sin. The Lord likened it to idolatry. "Avoid covetousness which is idolatry" (Col. 3:5). "Be content with such things as you have" (Heb. 13:5).

The Lord has been so good to us and we ought to be thankful and continually praise him. Besides this, even our trials and difficulties are for our eternal good.

Begin today to suppress the tendency to complain and give thanks instead. This is well-pleasing in his sight.

Keep Control of the Tongue

And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell.

James 3:6

He who can keep and control his tongue is a mature person and, if he can control his tongue, the rest of his body will give him little trouble. The tongue is the helm of the ship and if the helm is under control, the ship will be steered right.

The tongue can be the best thing in the world when it bears good tidings, kind words, and encouragement, but it can also be our worst enemy, "a fire, a world of iniquity." This small member can serve the glory of God or the cause of Satan, depending on the grace or the evil in the heart of its owner.

Let my words pass through three checkpoints before they are sent forth on their mission of either mercy or destruction:

1. Are they true?
2. Are they kind?
3. Are they really necessary?

Exhort One Another Daily

But exhort one another daily, while it is called today; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.

Hebrews 3:13

The word "exhort" carries several meanings; entreat (or beseech) one another to watchfulness, prayer, and holiness; instruct and edify one another in the Word of God and the way of life. But two other words stand out to me; they are *encourage* and *comfort* one another daily.

The believer has burdens enough, trials, and temptations aplenty; all grow weary, not *of* the way but *in* the way. There is not one of us who does not need encouragement and comfort daily. The spirit of God is our chief comforter, and the Word of God is our foundation of hope, but how good and helpful are the smile, handshake, words of affection, and encouragement from a faithful friend.

And see that ye abound in this grace also: *giving*; not only your material possessions but of yourself for Christ's sake.

The Holy Law of God

Tell me, you that desire to be under the law, do you not hear the law?

Galatians 4:21

The holy law of God does not require that you do the best that you can; it requires you to do the best that God can do! The law does not command you to love God as you are able but that you love God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength! The law does not demand that you show love to your neighbor but that you love him as you love yourself! The law not only requires that you *do* no evil, but that you *think* no evil. The law does not require a good life, but a *perfect life*! Except your righteousness *exceed* the best that any man has done so far, you will in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 5:20).

The true believer loves the law of God and delights in all his Word and commandments, but he in no way seeks to be justified by that law or to find in it his sanctification. When he comes to some understanding of God's holiness and the righteousness of God's law, he throws up his hands in guilt and helplessness, crying for mercy, grace, and righteousness in Christ.

Nothing shuts a man up to *Christ alone* like a view of God's holiness and the requirements of his law. Nothing makes the obedience and death of Christ so precious as to see him as our Representative before the justice of God.

The Best Promoter

The way of salvation by grace is the best promoter of holiness in all the world. A man once said, "I went to hear Spurgeon in the Tabernacle this morning, and he was crying out against salvation by works. The worst results will come of his teaching, for men will find in free grace an excuse for sin." No! No!

They will not! Salvation by grace promotes good works far better than the teaching of salvation by works ever did. Those who hope to be saved by their works generally have scanty works to be saved by, while those who put works aside altogether as their ground of hope, looking instead to grace alone, are generally the most zealous to perform good works.

Who loved Christ best at the Pharisee's feast? Simon the Pharisee, who had kept the law, or the woman at his feet seeking grace and mercy? Simon gave him no kiss, no oil, and no water for his tired feet (a common courtesy). The woman served him with her entire self and possessions.

The case is clear and closed!

Fulfill Our Calling

Paul told Timothy to do the work of an evangelist. Our Lord's commission to his disciples was to go into all the world and preach the gospel. This is the very thing that sends me forth in response to every invitation to *come over and help us*.

I do not enjoy being away from home most of the time, nor do I feel good about being out of my pulpit on Wednesday night; but our time to labor in the Lord's vineyard is short and mine gets shorter all the time. We must make full proof of our ministry; that is, we must *fulfill* our calling and commission.

I wish that all of you could be with me in these meetings and conferences and meet the people who come from miles around to hear the Word. Many of them, who have been blessed by our tapes, I meet for the first time. They bring their friends and family to hear me. They rejoice in the hope that we have in Christ Jesus. The influence of this church and its ministry grows every day. At the end of this year I will have preached in nearly 30 different churches and assemblies in 52 weeks.

God has given us an able and gifted assistant pastor and several young preachers who labor with me here, and who are being used of the Lord in other places. I thank God for him and them! Brethren, in answer to those who ask, "Does 13th St. mind the pastor being away so much?" I reply, "They do not mind at all because they thank God for what he has done here and rejoice that he is pleased to effectually open doors for us to share the good news of our Redeemer with others."

We all pray, "Here am I, Lord, *send me*." (Is. 6:8).

That I May Know Him

Philemon 3:7-10

I cannot know Christ through another man's mind. I cannot love him with another man's heart. I cannot believe on him with another man's faith. I cannot hear him with another man's ears or see him with another man's eyes!

I pray that he will reveal himself *to* me; that he will come and dwell *with* me; that Christ may be formed *in* me! It is not enough that I know of his historical life; it is not enough that I give mental agreement to his doctrines; it is not enough that I approve of his laws. I must gain an interest in Christ and be found in him, not having my own righteousness, but His.

The fact is, I no longer have my own life, it is his! I am not my own master; he is my Master. God's terms of surrender are unconditional!

The Church of Christ

"If only the people of this church could realize and continually thank God for what he has given to them in the gospel ministry; a

church dedicated to his worship and glory, Christian fellowship, and peace among believers." This thought was expressed to me by a brother who has recently moved to another city and has been visiting other churches in an effort to find a place to worship and hear the Word preached.

In my heart I know what we have and so do you. But Satan is a great adversary who opposes all who call on Christ. He will attack us in any way and area in order to disturb, disrupt, and confuse. I pray that I will *not* be his instrument of division, whether in the home, among friends, or in the congregation.

I urge all of you to love Christ more, one another more, and to protect with great jealousy this testimony for truth. When we get our priorities and values in the right order then we will know what we must do. And this order is Christ, his glory and gospel, his church and its fellowship, our families, and friends - and last of all - myself! I bow to these principles and *in this order*.

Will You Also Go Away?

Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away?

John 6:67

We are always grieved when members of the fellowship of believers quit attending the worship services and withhold their support of the gospel. I realize that what they are doing is expressing their displeasure with the pastor or some member for something they do not like by boycotting the church! They are using their absence and withholding their finances as means to punish the offending party. This is called "leverage" or "means to accomplish a purpose."

But the matter is much more serious than it appears at the first. If the pastor is called of God and the church is his body, boycotting them is to take a stand against God. It is to say, "If I had my way I would silence his message, close down his house, put the television program off the air, and bring home the missionaries." A church is not

a building; it is people. So ask yourself, "What kind of church would my church be if all the members were just like me?"

Let them all get their feelings hurt and pout when I pout. Let them all get offended and stay home when I stay home. Let them all withhold their gifts for preaching and missions when I withhold mine. No church could survive! There would not be a gospel witness left, neither here, nor on the mission field. We all operate from week to week, as God's faithful people supply the means.

This is why I have absolutely no patience with this type of conduct any more than approval of a soldier who lays down his arms in the face of the enemy and goes home. The army calls them deserters; I thank God for you who are faithful.

We are not perfect, but neither are you. Thank God for the person who can be counted on to fill his place and carry his share of the load; who requires no recognition, no praise, and never uses carnal leverage to gain his own end.

Young people, look to these loyal servants of Christ. They are not wandering stars; they are always in their places bearing a testimony for their Redeemer and his gospel; imitate them!

"Will you also go away?" The Master asked. "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life."

Love is Kind

1 Corinthians 13:1-4

Love is not equipped to injure, intimidate, or discourage. It has not acid nor dragon-fire. It carries no sword.

Love is kind; it is sweet with praise, fragrant with encouragement, and is gracious to help.

“Almighty Lord, my heart prepare,

The Saviour to embrace.”²⁴

Worship him and Hear His Word

I was glad when they said unto me, let us go into the house of the Lord.

Psalm 122:1

We know that the living God is a Spirit and can never be confined to a building, an organization, or even to a nation. His eye is in every place, and he causes it to rain on the just and the unjust. He is the provider of all men, especially of them that believe.

But there are times and places where men meet together to worship the Lord, to praise his name, to give thanks for his mercy, and to preach his gospel. This is what we are endeavoring to do.

We are not covetous of your possessions nor for the recognition and praise of men. We are only concerned with the glory of God and want the people of our town to worship him and to hear his Word preached in truth.

The Plague of Today

We are plagued today with a gospel of works, a religion of form and ceremony, and a zeal for God that is not according to knowledge. I want a return to the message God used in other days to awaken men to their need, to humble the proud Pharisee, and to give hope to real sinners.

²⁴ Toplady, Augustus. *None but Jesus*. 1759. Reprinted in *Our Own Hymnbook*. London: Passmore and Alabaster, 1883.

Righteousness Only in Christ

Philippians 3:7-9

When we review the fall of man in the garden we discover just how great that fall was and how infinite was our loss. We became corrupt, dying creatures—Once strong, now weak; once healthy; now sick; once always living, now always dying. Pain, sorrow, sickness and death is our lot.

We lost happiness and peace and became creatures of fear, shame, hate, and greed. We can't live alone and we can't live together. We lost fellowship with God, our sins having separated us from his presence and his favor. We are not dying men spiritually; we are dead men!

Underlying the whole matter is the sobering truth that, in the fall, man lost his righteous nature. "*God made man upright,*" but man became a sinner, a transgressor, a rebel, and an ungodly creature.

We have changed, oh! how we've changed! But God has not changed. The Lord is the same in holiness, justice, and truth. What he has required, he still requires. He demands of the creature what he must demand. He commands what man cannot produce—*a perfect righteousness*. "Who shall stand in his presence? He that hath clean hands and a pure heart."

What doth the Lord require of us? What he has always required; to fear God, to walk in *all* his ways, to love God, and to serve him in perfection with all our heart and soul!

But this is impossible! Of course it is, with you and me—but not with Christ. The Lord Jesus, in the flesh, fulfilled all that the Father required and satisfied his holy justice perfectly for all who believe. Jeremiah called him, "The Lord our Righteousness."

Righteousness cannot be found in us, our works, nor in the law. But righteousness is found in Christ. "I find no fault in him," declares heaven, earth, and hell. Oh! that I may win Christ and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is but filthy rags, but

with his spotless garment on. If I am in Christ, covered with his righteousness, I am as holy as he is.

Enter into the Ministry

After 35 years of preaching, both as a pastor and as a traveling evangelist, Bro. Barnard would often say, "Someday I'm going to enter the ministry." Don't laugh or even smile, but weep, for many men have entered the pulpit and the pastorate who have never really entered the ministry.

Our Lord summed it up in Matt. 20:27-28, "and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: *even* as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many."

Those who enter the ministry must cut all ties, bury all relatives, suppress all worldly ambitions, burn their bridges, give away fleshly security and live by the gospel, on the gospel, and for the gospel.

Now let someone say, "Someday I'm going to enter the ministry." Then and only then can he expect God to anoint and bless that ministry! And he most surely will!

Spiritual Growth

Spiritual growth and the opportunity to exhort and encourage others in this warfare can be hindered by both *excessive jesting* and *foolish talking* (Eph. 5:4). Humor and joy is to be commended to a point, but if it occupies our time and communion overmuch it is detrimental and should be curbed.

There is a time and place for all things. Let us be *wise* and *sober* without trying to impress through false piety. Those who are given to

too much foolishness should suppress it while those given to melancholy should learn to smile.

Trials

There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.

1 Corinthians 10:13

Though God's people be not exempt nor free from troubles, God has in his hand the remedies by which those troubles may be met and conquered. He will with each trial "make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it."

Laborers Together

We are laborers TOGETHER with God.

I Corinthians 3:9

The emphasis could be put on any of the words in this sentence and produce a needed message. For it is God's church, God's building, God's kingdom, and the sheep are his sheep. We are laborers—servants—who do his will; who plow, sow, and water at his command, under his instructions, and for his glory.

But the word which carries a most needed bit of rebuke and advice for all who labor in his vineyard is the word *together!* "We are laborers together with God." There is more than one oarsman on this boat; we must learn to row together. There is more than one farmer in the field; we must be happy to plant where another has plowed, water where another has planted, and rejoice in the privilege of glorifying God together.

There is really no place on the program for the man or woman who cannot rejoice in another's gifts, ministry, or contribution. There is no room for the self-seeker or the person who cannot, with sincerity, promote and encourage the efforts and endeavors (however small or large) of fellow believers. Laborers together is the Word and laborers together is the plan of our Lord.

Lord, let me find *your* place for me; the contribution *you* would have me make to bless *your* church and glorify *your* name! Give me a broken and humble spirit which recognizes my infirmities and dependence on thee. Enable me to blend in with other laborers in the field, to complement their efforts, and strengthen their arms. I will leave the field soon and the work will continue. Let me hear thee say, "Well done!"

"Sweet the day exceeding sweet,
When the saints together meet;
When the Savior is the theme,
When together they honor him."²⁵

Daily Loadeth Us

Blessed be the Lord, who daily loadeth us with benefits, even the God of our salvation. He that is our God is the God of salvation. Selah.

Psalm 68:19

What a privilege our Lord affords his people when he uses them to preach the gospel of his glorious grace! To be used of God once in a lifetime in the blessed purpose of his grace would be more than we could ask, but to be so gifted as to be *daily* loaded with this benefit is beyond human reason.

²⁵ Burder, George. *Sweet the Time, Exceeding Sweet*. Gospel Magazine, April, 1779; Collection of Hymns, 1784.

What mercy he spends upon us in his gospel commission! To bear the name of the Lord Jesus in our hearts, to sing his name in worship, to breathe his name in prayer—oh! what benefits! But to speak his glories in the preaching of his gospel—and to do so daily! Who can imagine that we, sinners saved by grace, should be so endowed?

Few congregations have been so richly benefited as this one with gospel ministries. May we treat each one as a golden heritage from "the God of our salvation," handling them all as precious entrustments from the One "Who loved us and gave himself for us."

Come and I Will Give You Rest

Come unto me all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

Matthew 11:28

Here is a message from our pastor in our bulletin from nearly twenty years ago (November, 1962). It is as fresh today as then:

"Pray for me as I preach today. Let us all pray that the Holy Spirit will continue to be the Spirit of revival, conviction, and praise; I believe that God is moving in our congregation in a very special and unusual way. Find a place to pray, and take your pastor, your children, and your friends to the throne of grace. Brethren, let us pray for one another. I have never felt the need for intercessory prayers as much as I feel it today.

"This word to sinners: God has been good to let you hear the gospel of redemption again. He has again commanded you to repent and hear his Son. How long will he permit you to rebel? Can you not say, 'Lord, I believe! Help thou my unbelief!' The Master says 'Come I will give you rest.' Christ receives sinners. The Pharisees declared, 'This man receiveth sinners.' Praise God that he still does."

The Pastor is Out of Town

“The pastor is out of town.” This is a comment heard quite often and it appears will be heard more in future months. The Lord has opened so many doors for me to preach the gospel that I hardly get back home before it is time to travel again. But I'm grateful, as I know you are, that he is pleased to use me and this church to minister the gospel to others. I try to be home for Sunday services but I do feel that if there is a congregation or a group of people asking me to come and preach to them the gospel of God's grace, I should go! I'm thankful for our able and gifted assistant Pastor. And I'm thankful that you have a concern for other pastors, churches, and the lost wherever they are.

When Joseph and Mary found Christ in the temple, they said, "We missed you and have sought you sorrowing?" The Master replied, "I must be about my Father's business." I miss all of you when I'm away. I miss the midweek service, the daily contacts, visiting, and being "at home." But we must be about the Father's business, which is to preach Christ and him crucified to every creature.

I believe I can say, "Christ is my life." Where I preach—you preach! Where I minister—you minister! God has given us a strong and generous church and he has been pleased to give us a worldwide ministry. Let us then be faithful stewards of the grace of God. We must not pray, "Here am I, Lord, send me," and then find reasons and excuses not to go!

I will crowd as much preaching, ministering, fellowship, and work as I can into the days I am here and, when I am away, I will look to you to minister to one another and pray for me. "Who am I, O Lord God? and what is my house (this church), that thou hast brought us hitherto?" (2 Samuel 7:18).

In The Beloved

2 Corinthians 9:15

Let us never imagine that an absolute God, holy and righteous, can speak peace to a guilty sinner outside of, or apart from, Christ. God is a consuming fire unto guilty sinners and he can never speak peace or rest to any of Adam's rebellious race until his holiness, justice, and righteousness have been perfectly honored and satisfied.

Unless the Son of God, as our surety, had paid the infinite ransom that justice demands, none of us would have ever heard anything from heaven but terrible thunderings of wrath and justice. When you hear a word of peace from God it will be in, by, and through his Beloved. "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift."

A Heart of Thanksgiving

Psalm 40:5

I recently read that somewhere, years ago in New England, there was a day of fasting each month to mourn over the sins of the land. At last, some public official suggested that, instead of the day of mourning each month, they should appoint a feast and thank God for the mercies and blessings which he had given.

I was deeply convicted and strongly impressed by this article. Do we dwell on our troubles and trials so much that we forget to give thanks for our blessings? Instead of counting our blessings, we exaggerate our misfortunes. Instead of praising God for many friends, our minds dwell on two or three contentious persons who wish us evil. Instead of talking about our years of good health, we discuss our hours of pain. Instead of rejoicing in our obedient and loving children, we complain about our prodigals. It is good to fast, mourn over sin, and to take our burdens to the Lord; but it is right to *leave them there!*

"A merry heart doeth good like a medicine, but a broken spirit drieth the bones." I plan to take this exhortation seriously and lift both

my heart and voice to him who is the fountain of all mercies. His mercies far outweigh his chastisements. David said, "Many, O Lord my God, are thy wonderful works which thou hast done, and thy thoughts which are to us-ward. They cannot be reckoned up in order unto thee. If I would declare and speak of them, they are more than can be numbered" (Ps. 40:5).

John Newton once wrote, "Lord, if I have not loved thee before, let me begin today."²⁶ Today is a good day to love him, thank him, and praise him. Let this be "The day of beginning again."

Try The Spirits

Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try THE SPIRITS whether they are of God, because many false prophets are gone out into the world.

1 John 4:1

Every man that preaches or teaches has some spirit or other upon him and in him. It may be a spirit of covetousness, a spirit of bitterness against others, a spirit of pride and conceit, a spirit from Satan to deceive and confuse, or *the spirit* of grace and truth. Therefore, we must take heed what we hear and try the spirits whether they are of God.

How are spirits of preachers to be tried? By the blessed Word of God! We must seriously weigh all things by the scriptures.

²⁶ Newton, John. *Lovest Thou Me?* Olney Hymns. London: 1779.

Dwell Together in Unity

Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity.

Psalm 133:1

I preached last week for such a delightful and enthusiastic crowd in Canada, Kentucky. After having dinner with about twenty people at the pastor's home, we adjourned to the porch for coffee and talk.

Pastor Justice lamented the apparent divisions and schisms among the people who believe and preach the gospel of God's free grace. "It ought not to be so!" he said. "For those who are loved by Christ and who claim to love Christ, to not love one another is beyond understanding. If the person and work of Christ, or the character of God, or the authority of Scripture divides us, then so be it; but let us not defend our personalities, programs, traditions, and personal peculiarities to the point of separation from true believers."

It is always good, while building new fences, to check out and mend those which have served our cause for years! Brethren, let us love one another, for love is of God!

Lord, What Will You Have Me to Do?

Acts 9:6

"Lord, what will you have me to do?" This is Paul's question on the road where he met the sovereign Christ. It was not, what do I think is best for me? or what will afford me the most pleasure and comfort? or even what do other people do? but "Lord, what will you have me to do?"

In every case enable me, by thy grace, to do what is pleasing in thy sight and that which will bring glory to thy name. Where we get in trouble is putting our wills and ways before His! It is not I but Christ,

his gospel, his church, his kingdom, his glory, which must be considered.

When this is settled "I" will fall in the right place and though the way may not be easy, in the end, it will be pleasant. "In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths" (Prov. 3:6).

I Must Preach the Gospel

For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of; for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!

1 Corinthians 9:16

The most humbling and challenging thing I face—the great concern of my heart—is that my generation experience a return to the preaching of the gospel of God's glory. We are plagued today with a gospel of works, a religion of form and ceremony, and a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge (Rom. 10:2).

I pray for a return to the message God was pleased to use in other days to awaken sinners to their need for mercy; that message that reveals the redemptive glory of God in Christ; that message which humbles the proud Pharisee and gives hope to the chief of sinners.

If God is pleased to restore that message, then men will once again sense the awesome Holy presence of the Living God. Gone will be the voice of the proud sinner who inwardly debates whether he will accept Jesus or reject him. Gone will be the haughty spirit that refuses to bow to the Lordship of Christ. Gone will be the bragging of the religionist who boasts of his righteousness and what he has done for God.

Once again we may hear men cry:

"Depth of mercy! Can there be,
Mercy still reserved for me?"

Can my God His wrath forbear
Me, the chief of sinners, spare?"²⁷

It may be that we will hear someone ask:

"And can it be that I should gain
An int'rest in the Savior's blood?"²⁸

I know not what course others may take, but I am determined to put forth every effort to preach that gospel every time I step into the pulpit. "For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of; for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!" (1 Cor. 9:16).

Today is the Day of Salvation

For He saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.

2 Corinthians 6:2

It is one thing to "wait on the Lord" (Ps. 27:14) in matters of providence, trial, and decisions regarding our plans and purposes. But the command to repent and believe on Christ is in the imperative! It is "*Now* is the accepted time; *Today* is the day of salvation."

Someone may say, "But I want to be sure." You *can* be sure that you are a guilty sinner; that you have no ability to justify yourself before God; that God sent his Son to save; that he is a sufficient Savior; and that not to believe this gospel is to make God a liar and presume on his patience!

Walk in *the light you have*; look to Christ now and confess what faith you have, depending on him to give you more faith.

²⁷ Wesley, Charles. *Depth of Mercy*. Hymns and Sacred Poems. London: 1740.

²⁸ Wesley, Charles. *And Can It Be*. Psalms and Hymns. London: 1738.

Praise The Lord

Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised in the city of our God, in the mountain of His holiness.

Psalm 48:1

Men ought to praise God for he is worthy of praise; "The Lord is good and greatly to be praised." Praise is characteristic of the true child of God. The man who pretends to love God can read the Bible, attend church, and even fast and pray; but to praise God with all the heart is a mark of true sonship.

Praise is beneficial to ourselves. Nothing will oil the wheels of the wagon of life like praising God. Praise will end murmuring and complaining. Praise will drive out discontent. Praise will dispel doubt and fear. Praise will bring us in tune with God's universe, for creation is but a temple in which everything that hath breath ought to praise the Lord.

Salvation is for Sinners

The Son of man came eating and drinking, and they say, Behold a man gluttonous, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners. But wisdom is justified of her children.

Matthew 11:19

The Pharisees called our Lord, "The friend of sinners." They thought to brand him with shame and hold his name up to ridicule; but what they thought to be shame is his chief glory.

He is indeed "the friend of sinners." Thank God he is! This is what makes the gospel good news. This is no sham gospel that we preach, but it is real salvation for real sinners. It is real grace for real guilt. We preach no gospel of merit for moralists. We preach good news of

pardon and forgiveness for men who are nothing, have nothing, and can do nothing!

“Come, ye sinners, poor and needy,
Weak and wounded, sick and sore;
Jesus ready stands to save you,
Full of pity, love and power.”²⁹

Cast All Your Care Upon the Lord

Casting all your care upon him; for He careth for you.

I Peter 5:7

Charles Tindley wrote, "Take your burden to the Lord and leave it there."³⁰ I believe I have learned the first half of this. I do take my cares and concerns, my needs and burdens, to the Lord; but too often, after I have taken them to the Lord, I feel them on my mind as heavily as before!

Beloved, this is not the way to trust God. The way to trust God is to cast my care on him altogether and go away resting in the fact that he cares for me, will work it all out for my good and his glory, and, if what I am doing is his work and will, then he will preserve it. If it is not his work, then let it go to pieces, and the sooner the better!

I know that the believer is to be burdened for the lost, concerned that his conduct, conversation, and character glorify God, and that he is to approach his duties and responsibilities with a serious and dedicated mind. But, when we put forth our best effort, then let's leave it all in his hands. Let's leave all of our fears and anxieties at his feet. We are but instruments in his hand; it is his world, his work, and his church. His ways are not our ways, and his thoughts are not our thoughts. His purpose is accomplished in success and failure, in prosperity and adversity, and in life and death!

²⁹ Hart, Joseph. *Come, Ye Sinners, Poor and Needy*. Hymns Composed on Various Subjects. 1759.

³⁰ Tindley, Charles. *Leave it There*. ca. 1906.

Trust

Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him: but I will maintain mine own ways before him.

Job 13:15

How blessed it would be for us, and for all who cross our paths, if we could put our theology into deeds and not mere words. We profess to believe in God's immutable sovereignty but then constantly mourn over our lot in life. We claim to believe in God's purpose and providence, but fill every ear that will listen with our discontent and our sad state of affairs. Usually those who do the most complaining have, in reality, the least to complain about, while those who have serious handicaps, heavy burdens, and deep sorrows find a reason to praise the Lord and rejoice in his blessings. I need not remind you of God's anger with Israel because of their murmuring, or to remind you of the words of our Lord, "Take not anxious thought for what ye shall eat, drink, or wear," or to remind you of the words of Paul, "Let your conversation be without-covetousness, and be content with such things as ye have."

No! I need not remind you of these words; for you have read them, taught them, and perhaps preached them. Our problem, then, is not ignorance of the Word and will of God (perhaps it would be better if this were our problem!). Our problem is identified in Heb. 4:2, "*The word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it.*"

It is a heart problem, for out of the heart the mouth speaks. And, truthfully, our complaints are not with men, who are but second causes, but with God, whom *we say* is the first cause and Lord of our lives.

I can understand the free-willer (whose god is but a puppet of man's permission) complaining, murmuring, and finding fault with all about him! But the most inconsistent person living has to be the professed Christian who says he believes, "The Most High rules in the kingdom of men and giveth it to whomsoever he will," or, "In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus

concerning you," and then fills the air about him with a constant stream of complaints and reasons why he should be somewhere else, why he should be doing something else, or why he should be blessed in a more abundant measure.

A certain cure for anxious care is *trust*. "Though he slay me, yet will I trust him."

Christ in You, the Hope of Glory

To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

Colossians 1:27

To have a good hope of resurrection, of deliverance from judgment, of eternal life, and glory with Christ; in all honesty, is not this the goal of our faith? Is not this our reason for searching the Scriptures? Is not this my reason for preaching and yours for hearing? Paul gives us the only real hope of glory in this brief sentence: "*Christ in you!*"

Two words catch our attention immediately; *Christ* and *you*. All that the law requires *of you* is fulfilled *in Christ*. All that justice demands *of you* is met *in Christ*. All the righteousness *you* need is in *Christ*.

But there is a little two-letter word in this sentence that is all important; the word "in." Christ *in* you, the hope of glory. It is not just Christ in the covenant, or Christ in the manger, or Christ in the world, or Christ on the cross, or Christ in the tomb, or Christ on the throne but Christ *in you*.

Our hope of glory is Christ in us!—Christ believed in the mind, Christ received in the heart, Christ loved in the soul, and Christ followed in the life.

"Jesus Christ is made to me
All I need, all I need.
He alone is all my plea,
He is all I need.

“Wisdom righteousness and pow’r,
Holiness forevermore,
My redemption full and sure,
He is all I need.”³¹

Bless the LORD, O my Soul

Psalm 103

How does one *bless the Lord*?

I would say that when we sincerely, in our hearts, gladly ascribe unto the Lord all glory, power, and dominion, we are blessing him.

When we wish others to love and believe on him, faithfully preaching and witnessing of his saving grace, we are blessing him.

When we grieve over our dullness of spirit and desire to love him with a perfect heart, we are blessing him.

When we sing, praise, and worship him with a true heart, we are blessing him.

When we endure trials and burdens with a submissive and grateful attitude, not murmuring against his good providence, we are blessing him.

When we wait upon the Lord, ready to do his will, we are blessing him.

When we can truthfully think and say, "*By the grace of God, I am what I am,*" we are blessing him!

³¹ Jones, Charles P. *All I Need*. 1906.

Concerning Churches

Last Sunday I told you some straight facts of life concerning churches. Some are born in the *spring* of revival; fresh with new life, zeal, and gospel preaching. Then comes the full *summer* when all is in bloom and fruits are borne on every limb. But alas, signs of *fall* begin to show; leaves fall, fruit diminishes, and there is a coldness in the air. Then comes the total deadness of *winter* when the candlestick is removed and it is no more.

I believe the warm *sun of love* can at least delay this experience, which has been the lot of every great church!

Law and Grace

Romans 11:5-6

No two things in the world could be any different than law and grace. They are as opposite as light and dark. They can no more agree than fire and water. What is so amazing then is, while law and grace are so diametrically opposed, the human mind is so void of spiritual understanding and turned away from God, that the most difficult thing for a human to do is to discriminate between the two. Men insist on mixing what God has positively put asunder.

The man who knows the place of the law and the glory of God's free grace, who can rest in Christ alone for all that the law requires and justice demands, is a man who knows the gospel.

The first difficulty in conversion is to get a man *lost*—truly lost! A lost sinner is hard to find. There are plenty of weak people, even sinful people, but only the Holy Spirit can produce a *lost* sinner. A sinner so lost that no law, system of works, or moral code can do him any good.

The second difficulty in conversion is to teach a man *the gospel*. Few there be that really find it. This gospel of God's *free grace* in Christ comes to the lost sinner without any return on his part. It is the

gift of God from beginning to end. Even repentance, faith, and good works are his fruit.

The third difficulty in conversion is to bring a believing sinner to *rest* all of his days in the same grace and love that took him in. We are chosen, called, and kept by his free grace. Faith rests in Christ alone! Faith even excludes itself as a work in salvation, for faith is not a thing upon which the sinner rests or pleads but, rather, he rests entirely and only in Christ and pleads the Saviour's merits.

It is not the *fact* that we believe but the *person* on whom we believe!

“Here I raise mine Ebenezer;
Hither by thy help come;
And I hope by thy good pleasure
Safely to arrive at home.”³²

Grace or Judgment

Romans 3:19-20

Brother Scott Richardson once said, "There is a point where God and men must meet, whether in *grace* or *judgment*; and that point is where both are revealed *as they are*."

If a man meets God *now in grace*, God will be revealed to that man in his true nature and character; holy, just, and righteous! That man will also have his own nature and character revealed; crooked, unclean, and corrupt, by birth, practice, and choice. The grace which prevails on behalf of the sinner is God's grace in Christ, his mercy in the person of a Mediator and Advocate, the Lord Jesus Christ.

If a man meets God *in judgment at that great day*, God will be revealed as he has been, is, and always will be; holy, just, and righteous! That man will also stand before God as he has been, is, and

³² Robinson. Robert. *Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing*. A Collection of Hymns Used by the Church of Christ in Angel Alley, Bishopgate. 1759.

always will be; unclean, unrighteous, and corrupt. The difference in that day will be there is no mediator, no advocate, no Saviour! The man will be left to answer alone for all his ungodliness and indifference.

This is the essence of our message to you; "all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him *with whom we have to do*" (Heb. 4:13). We have no choice in the matter. We must meet God as we are and *we must meet God as he is*. If we find grace in his sight and, by faith, meet him in Christ, there will be no meeting in judgment; for there is no judgment to them who are in Christ Jesus. But if we have no saving interest in Christ, what a fearful and dreadful day that final meeting will be!

“And, oh, what a weeping and wailing,
As the lost were told of their fate;
They cried for the rocks and the mountains,
They prayed, but their prayer was too late.”³³

Redemption Through Christ

This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.

1 Timothy 1:15

Paul wrote, "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners." *Redemption through Christ* is God's grand design from all eternity and will be completed when all of his elect are perfectly conformed to the image of Christ.

First, Christ was our surety and sacrifice from all eternity, “The Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.”

Second, Christ was the promised "*seed of the woman*" in Eden after the fall.

³³ Shadduck, Bertram H. The Great Judgement Morning. 1894.

Third, Christ was pictured and typified in the sacrifices and ceremonies of the law.

Fourth, Christ was the subject of all the prophet's messages. "Moses wrote of him," "To him give all the prophets witness."

Fifth, all of the faithful spirit-led men looked for and awaited his coming. "Abraham saw my day." Isaiah wrote that he would "make his soul an offering for sin" and "by his stripes we would be healed!"

Sixth, in the fullness of time he came into the world clothed in the likeness of our flesh. His mission was not to condemn but to save. His earthly life was marked by perfect obedience to the Father and compassionate love for sinners. "This man receiveth sinners and eateth with them."

Seventh, on the cross of Calvary he died under the wrath and judgment of God for all our sins. "By one offering he perfected forever them that are sanctified." By his obedience the law is honored and by his death justice is satisfied.

Eighth, he has ascended to heaven. As our forerunner he has entered the holiest and is sat down on the right hand of God, where he ever lives to make intercession for us. "Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour."

Ninth, the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ and his redeeming grace has been committed to faithful men to be proclaimed to all the world. "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel, he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, he that believeth not shall be damned."

Saved by Grace

Ephesians 2:8-9

"*By grace are ye saved,*" declared Paul as he took the crown off the head of man in every respect and gave all the glory to God. He exalted the Lord God, our gracious sovereign, who will have mercy upon whom he will have mercy.

I wish every preacher would proclaim this glorious doctrine, "*by grace are ye saved.*" This is the doctrine that will shake the gates of hell if it is preached. If you are ever to get any comfort, assurance or hope, it will not be in your morality, works, or free will, but it will come from realizing that it is only by the grace of God in Christ Jesus that we are saved.

What the sun is to the heavens, that is what God's grace in Christ is to theology. Take away the mercy of Christ in substitution and there is nothing left worth preaching or believing.

Bulletin Articles of Henry Mahan For the Year 1983

Our Authority

Our authority is *the Word of God!* We are God's ministers; we preach God's truth; we declare God's gospel of free grace as revealed in the Word of God; and we have no time to debate and dispute with the worms of the dust concerning their thoughts and feelings about redemption and eternal life!

Our Lord declared, "All authority is given unto me in heaven and earth. Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world" (Mt. 28:18-20).

If men hear you, they hear him who sent you. But if they despise you, it's not you they despise but Christ and his Word. If they reject you, shake the dust off your feet as a witness against them and go somewhere else and preach the gospel. Christ did not dispute with men; he preached to them.

The Power to Pardon and a Nature to Forgive

Many years ago, having offended the king, a noble was brought before James II of England. “You know it is in my power,” said the king, “to pardon you.”

The man, knowing the cruel character of James, replied, “It is in your power but it is not in your nature.”

We have offended the Lord God and are *justly condemned*. However, I rejoice that it is not only in his power to pardon, but also his nature to show mercy and to forgive.

See Him

He that seeth the Son and believeth on him hath eternal life.

John 6:40

Put the emphasis where it belongs—“He that seeth the Son.” Look to Christ, lay hold upon Christ, learn of Christ; in him and through him you will be led into all truth.

We do not arrive at Christ by getting our doctrines straight but, rather, we come to a right understanding of doctrine and theology by seeing Christ. Someone asked Mr. Spurgeon, “What body of divinity do you recommend?” He replied, “I have never heard of but one body that divinity ever had and that was the body of our Lord Jesus, and the study of that body of divinity will make you systematic theologians of the best kind.”

If you understand anything of astronomy, you must begin at the center, which is the sun. And if you put anything at the center of your system of teaching and doctrine except the Lord Jesus Christ, you will only fall into error and confusion, as if you tried to study the stars without having the sun at the center.

A true sight of Christ reveals all that is *in Christ*, and according to the Word, God was in Christ reconciling the world. “He that hath seen me hath seen the Father.” *He* that has seen Christ has seen the Father, seen the Spirit, and will, in God’s own time, see all the rest.

Another important thing: a true revelation of Christ will take care of some unpleasant things that we see. I see sin in myself but I also *see him* as my righteousness and sin offering! I see trial and sorrows everyday but I also *see him* caring for me and in his good providence working them all together for my good! I see death and judgement approaching but I also *see him*, my Justifier, my resurrection, and my life! I see friends and neighbors in darkness, ignorance, and unbelief, but I also *see him* who is able to save to the uttermost them that come to God by him! I see Satan and the forces of evil seeking the destruction of Christ’s church but I also *see him* who is the conqueror of the prince of this world and remember his promise, “The gates of hell shall not prevail.”

My friends, if you can *see him*, you will find that one sight will make amends for the dark things you see!

Born of God

Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him.

1 John 5:1

All who are born of God believe that Jesus is *the Christ*. The title of Christ signifies *anointed* and includes all the offices of the Son of God. To believe him to be the Christ is to believe him to be the *that prophet* Moses said should come, the one who would declare the whole mind of the Father. It is to believe him to be *that priest* who should come after the order of Melchisedec and make atonement for our sins and intercede for the transgressors. It is to believe him to be *that king* whom God hath set over all things.

This believing is more than a mere assent to the fact or acknowledgment of it; devils have done as much (Lk. 4:41). Rather, it is to believe with the heart (Rom. 10:9-10) and to look to him, receive him, and trust him as our righteousness; to lay hold of him as our fountain of life; and to continue through all of life to find in him all we need.

Such faith is far beyond the reach of the human mind; it is the gift of God. Those who believe are *born of God*. This faith is the result of regeneration, not the product of natural wisdom.

Those who are born of God will also love all who are born of God! The phrase “him also that is begotten of him” is not just a reference to Christ alone but also of all who are born of the Spirit. And if we love Christ, we also love *all* who are born of God. It is quite impossible to love Christ and not love his body (1 Jn. 4:19-21).

Malice

Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings, as newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby: if so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious.

1 Peter 2:1-3

Peter exhorts us to lay aside all *malice*. Usually when we think of malice we confine it to hatred or a deliberate desire to do harm to another as *with malice aforethought*. But malice in a believer can take other directions:

It might be a continual *unfriendly feeling* or attitude toward another person or another race.

It might be an *unforgiving spirit* that may not wish actual harm but still holds a long-time grudge over past mistakes.

It might be a *secret desire* to see another fail or to get what's coming to him.

It might be an *unwillingness to speak* to another or to show common courtesy.

It might be a *spirit of pride*, which enjoys cutting another or humbling another to show our superior intelligence, courage, or strength.

It might be a *gossip's tongue*, which enjoys relating the weaknesses, infirmities, and failures of others.

Call this what you will, but it all boils down to *malice* and ill-will, which is unbecoming to those who are themselves the objects of mercy. How can I have anything but pity and compassion for a fellow-worm?

The True Social Gospel

C.H. Spurgeon had a profound sympathy with the poor and the unfortunate, but it is doubtful whether it ever occurred to him that a fundamental change in the social structure was needed. For Spurgeon that would have been *putting the cart before the horse*. A changed social structure does not necessarily mean a changed society; but *changed hearts* and *changed individuals* within society *must* of necessity bring about a change in families, homes, and businesses.

Spurgeon felt called of God to first preach Christ to sinners and to lead his church in an evangelistic effort to reach sinners with the gospel. What we call *social service* was for him merely the outworking and expression of genuine Christian character as a result of knowing the Redeemer. If men and women know and love Christ, they will strive to live for his glory, walk in his commandments, and help those who are in need.

I feel very strongly about *many* of the issues raised by the fundamentalist preachers. We are opposed to wholesale abortion,

drugs, drunkenness, pornography, and many TV programs, but is it the ministry of God's preachers and churches to *reform* Rome, or to preach the glorious gospel of Christ?

If Rome did reform, would they be any nearer the kingdom of God or merely whited sepulchers? Reformation is not salvation, but true salvation brings about a change in conduct and behavior. There are temptations to *have a say* in politics, in school affairs, and in social issues; but let us dedicate ourselves once again to the motto of the Apostle Paul; "I am *determined* to know nothing among you save Christ and him crucified" (1 Cor. 2:2).

The Life of Faith

True faith is built upon the strongest evidence possible—the *Word of God*! True faith is a total dependence upon *the Lord Jesus Christ* for all our needs; such as forgiveness, sanctification, peace, and eternal life.

The true believer renounces all confidence in his flesh, rejoices only in Christ Jesus, and worships God in Spirit. He feeds upon Christ as the bread of life, embraces Christ as his wedding garment, and trusts himself to the care of Christ as his shepherd, teacher, priest, and king. This is the life of faith.

To Have the Life of God

Christ is the way, the truth, and the life. He is the way *because* he is the truth and the life. He said, "I am the truth" and "I am the life."

This means if we have Christ, we have the true life of God. It also means that if we do not have Christ, we do not have real life.

Our natural life is but a continual dying. As the Son of God, Christ has the fullness of life in himself; as Redeemer and Mediator, he is the fountain of life for all who come to him by faith.

Sin Not

“My little children, these things I write unto you, that you sin not.”

1 John 2:1

John does not hold out the possibility that any person can be totally free from sin. This would be contrary to the Scriptures and to his own words found in the first chapter.

He is saying that the believer will not live in sin, indulge the flesh, walk in disobedience, or behave like the world. The true grace of God in a man’s heart does not excuse or condone sin, but rather condemns it and gives him a continuous desire to please Christ and to be like Christ in both attitude and conduct.

True believers mourn their sins, confess them, and seek to avoid them. Under no circumstances does a believer justify sin because it was atoned for by Christ. But we do give thanks that we have an advocate with the Father, a great High Priest who pleads his righteousness and sacrifice (and I add for your comfort) *most effectually!*

Coming to God by Christ

Every man by nature is attempting to climb up to heaven on the broken ladder of works, or trying to cross over the flood of God’s wrath on the fallen bridge of the law. But sure as God is holy, all these attempts will fail; for “By the works of the law, no flesh shall be justified in his sight.”

God has established a bridge between heaven and earth by the *obedience, death, and intercession* of his eternal Son, and every other way to heaven but this is blocked by the justice and holiness of God.

“I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no man cometh to the Father, but by me” (Jn. 14:6).

Giving unto the Lord

Why not have a rummage sale, candy sale, or a supper to raise money for the missionaries or for the church? Why not a bond sale with high percentage returns? David gave us the answer when Araunah offered him the threshing-floor, the oxen, and the wood to sacrifice to the Lord. “I will not offer unto the Lord my God *that which costs me nothing*” (2 Sam. 24:24).

A gracious heart will not try to serve God with that which costs him nothing. If it is worth nothing to you, it is worth *less to God!* Any gift, service, or effort for the glory of God that does not in some way involve the element of *sacrifice* or *self-denial* is of no spiritual value.

Our examples in the Scripture of true worship demand the *first-fruits*, the *firstling* of the flock, and the *choice* lamb. God gave his Son, Abraham brought Isaac, the widow gave all she had. And we would bring used clothing, a collection of Coke bottles, and our spare time? God doesn't want your *spare* anything!

1. A gift which costs me nothing reveals a lack of faith in God's power to provide.

2. A gift which costs me nothing reveals a lack of love for the object of that gift. True love considers no labor, cost, or difficulty too great.

3. A gift which costs me nothing reveals a lack of regard for God's glory and majesty. The prophet in Malachi 1:8 says, “Bring your stale bread and your sick sheep to your governor and see if he will accept it.”

4. A gift which costs me nothing will never be accepted by the living God who said, “If any man come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me!”

“My life, my love, I give to thee,
Thou Son of God, who died for me.”³⁴

³⁴ Hudson, Ralph E. *I'll Live for Him*. Various. 1882

A Good Employee

“Exhort servants to be obedient to their own masters and to please them well in all things, not grumbling, not stealing, but showing good fidelity, that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things” (Titus 2:9-10).

1. Be submissive and obedient to your employer, whether he is a believer or an unbeliever. You are hired to do a job; do it with all your heart as unto the Lord.

2. Seek to please your employer and give satisfaction in every way. Pride of workmanship and production is not to be condemned. Laziness and indifference is a disgrace to the gospel.

3. Don't talk back or contradict your employer. Do not reply to orders given in a cutting, saucy, or grumbling manner. Someone said, “The boss may not always be right, but he is always the boss.”

4. Do not steal from your firm in time, money, or things you consider of small value. Do not convert to your own use, without permission, that which belongs to the company.

5. Prove yourself to be a loyal, reliable, and faithful employee. It is not loyalty to criticize and find fault with your employer behind his back. Keep trusts and confidences which are committed to you.

In fulfilling the part of a *good servant* and a loyal employee you are able to adorn the gospel you believe, making it attractive to others.

Perfect in Christ

There is nothing that will make a person look to Christ alone, cling to Christ alone, rest in Christ alone, and love Christ alone than to realize that everything God is, everything God requires, and everything the sinner needs is in Christ alone. We are perfect in him!

He is perfect and our being *in him* makes us perfect in God's sight.

Near, so near to God,
nearer I cannot be;
For in the person of His Son,
I am as near as He!³⁵

No Bridge between Merit and Mercy

The Scriptures plainly say, "He that believeth on the Son of God hath eternal life" (Jn. 3:36). I plan to leave it right there; adding nothing and taking nothing away.

Jesus Christ is the all-sufficient Saviour, and he that believes on him is not condemned. I also add that this matter of justification by faith is the article by which a church, a minister, and a professor of Christianity stands or falls. There is no bridge between *merit* and *mercy*. They are as far apart as the poles and never the twain shall meet.

Faith Must Be Tried

Faith must be tried. It can only be proved by trial. Faith is too often counterfeited and so trials are sent by our heavenly Father that we may determine whether we truly believe him or whether we are leaning on the flesh.

If I would know the genuineness of my faith—that I am not a stony-ground hearer; that I have not run in vain—my faith and profession must be tested in the furnace of affliction and the fire of trial.

³⁵ Bonar, Horatius. *A Mind at Perfect Peace with God*. Hymns of Faith and Hope. London: Castell Brothers, 1857.

Habit or a New Heart?

Religion can change the *habits*; it takes the grace of God to create a *new heart*!

A Meek and Quiet Spirit

We do not persuade men to repentance, faith, and righteousness, nor promote the glory of *God with an angry spirit*. “For the wrath of man *worketh not* the righteousness of God.” A meek and quiet spirit is of great price in the sight of God!

Abraham Believed God

To believe God is no little thing! It is the evidence of a heart reconciled to God. It is proof of our being weaned from our works and deeds. It is a clear sign of true conviction of sin. It is honoring to Christ, our only Redeemer. It is the essence of true worship, and it is the root of sincere obedience!

The person who believes God in spite of his sin and infirmities, who believes God in spite of fleshly wisdom and opposition, who believes God come what may, gives the Lord God more honor and glory than the cherubim and seraphim in their continual adoration. *Do you think faith a little thing?*

How is it then that our Lord said, “He that believeth on the Son hath eternal life?” How is it that a whole nation perished in the wilderness because of *unbelief*? How is it that we are said to be *justified by faith* and *he that believeth not shall be damned*?

Faith is the parent grace. Whatever you put in second place, faith must have the first consideration, for it is no small thing—*it is your life*! If you can believe, “all things are possible to him that believeth.”

“Lord, I *believe*, help thou my *unbelief*!”

John Flavel said, “The soul is the life of the body. Faith is the life of the soul. Christ is the life of faith.”³⁶

Inscribed upon the portal from afar,
Conspicuous as the brightness of a star,
Legible only by the light they give,
Stand the soul-quickenings words:
believe and live.³⁷

What is a Good Hope?

God hath given us a good hope through grace.

2 Thessalonians 2:16

Being conceived in sin, shapen in iniquity, and brought forth from the womb speaking lies, my hope is that I shall be born again by the Spirit of God, and the Word of God, and given the very life of God through faith.

Being a sinner by choice and by practice, having offended God in thought, word, and deed, my hope is that my sins shall be forgiven by the mercy of God and blotted out by the blood of Christ.

Having no righteousness nor merit of my own (for even my righteousnesses are as filthy rags in his sight), my hope is of being clothed in the beauty of holiness and the righteousness of God, accomplished by the obedience and merit of Christ.

Being frail flesh and subject to temptations both within and without, from the flesh and the devil, my hope is that by the grace of God I will continue in the faith of Christ, hold to my profession, and persevere to the end, able to declare with Paul, “I have kept the faith.”

³⁶ Flavel, John. *The Method of Grace*. 1681. W. Barnes and Son (1820); reprinted by Banner of Truth Trust, 1968.

³⁷ Spurgeon, Charles. *My Sermon Notes from Ecclesiastes to Malachi*. London: Passmore and Alabaster, 1885. Poem attributed to William Cowper.

Being a dying man (for I shall go the way of all who have lived before; as “it is appointed unto men once to die,” I shall die), my hope is that, in Christ, I shall have part in the first resurrection and that this mortal shall put on immortality and this corruptible, incorruption.

Having a desire to be with Christ and to be like Christ, my hope is that I shall live eternally in his presence and be perfectly conformed to his blessed image!

“These eyes shall see him in that day,
The Lord that died for me;
And all my rising bones shall say,
Lord, who is like to thee?”³⁸

“There shall I bathe my weary soul
In seas of heavenly rest,
And not a wave of trouble roll
Across my peaceful breast.”³⁹

Our Authority is the Word of God

Our authority is *the Word of God*! We are God’s ministers; we preach God’s truth; we declare God’s gospel of free grace as revealed in the Word of God; and we have no time to debate and dispute with the worms of the dust concerning their thoughts and feelings about redemption and eternal life!

Our Lord declared, “All authority is given unto me in heaven and earth, go ye therefore into all the world and preach the gospel.” If men hear you, they hear me; if they despise you, they despise me; so shake the dust off your feet as a witness against them; go somewhere else and preach the gospel.

Christ did not dispute with men; he preached to them.

³⁸ Toplady, Augustus. ‘Tis Sweet to Rest in Lively Hope. 1777.

³⁹ Watts, Isaac. *When I can Read my Title Clear*. Hymns and Spiritual Songs. 1707.

Looking unto Him

I'm sure that some who lived in the days of our Lord's visitation to earth, and many who heard the gospel from the apostles and the faithful preachers who followed them, could tell you the exact day when they met the risen Redeemer and bowed to his sovereign rule. I have never felt that it was important for a person to be able to tell *when* he was saved, but rather that he be able *now* to state that he has experienced repentance towards God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ; that *now* he is looking to Christ as Prophet, Priest, and King; that *now* he is resting in his righteousness and effectual sin-offering.

Too often men and women like to establish a time of conversion and some sort of experience, in order to have something to look back upon for comfort and assurance. But this is dangerous! We are not to look to anything nor anyone but Christ for our hope, our assurance, and our comfort. Paul spoke of "forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forth unto those things which are before" and "looking unto the Lord Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith."

Most of us came through the confusion, errors, and false professions of modern fundamentalism, and had so much to unlearn and so many false foundations which had to be destroyed, that it is difficult to set an exact hour when our eyes were turned totally from our idols of religion to our living Lord—when our hearts were weaned from the pride of our religious works and professions, and brought to *rest in him alone!* This is the unaided work of the Spirit of God and the Word of God, and this is the living union which shall never be dissolved.

A Time of Refreshing

I'm encouraged to believe that our Lord is honoring the gospel which is preached here and in other places. In the past two months we have seen some conviction of sin and some sincere interest in the good news of redemption. The baptismal waters are being disturbed and people are publicly confessing their faith in the Lord Jesus.

We are determined to preach the Word of truth about God's character, man's lost condition, and Christ's sufficiency and willingness to save, regardless of the results; but how blessed it is when our gospel becomes "the savor of life unto life."

My word to all who know and love Christ is:

Pray much for yourselves, for those who preach, and for those who come under the sound of the gospel.

Invite and bring your friends and relatives to these services and "wherever prayer and preaching is wont to be made."

Give out tapes and literature to all who will listen and read.

It may be that we are entering a time of refreshing of revival. I am receiving more and more invitations to preach the Word all over the country, more than I can possibly fill. Other brethren are experiencing the same thing. We have come through a certain dry spell and it would be such a blessing to see our Lord manifest his grace among us.

Let us, therefore, dedicate ourselves to the task at hand. And, as Bro. Richardson said, "We only have a few more years at most, let us be determined to give it our best shot."

His Will be Done

A believer was quite ill and, upon being asked by a friend if he thought he would recover from the illness, he replied, "It really does not matter. If I die, I shall be with the Lord. And if I live, he will be with me. So, whether I live or die, I am the Lord's. His will be done."

A Gracious Arrangement

Christ, as King, has received from the Father universal authority over all flesh to the end that he may confer eternal life upon his elect. To save a people for his glory, the Father has taken the whole world of men and angels from under the immediate rule of God as Absolute God and placed them under the authority, power, and government of Christ the Mediator.

Because of this gracious arrangement *a fallen race is permitted to exist*. A sinful world encountering an absolute God must be instantly doomed to hell. But men, as rebels, live on in virtue of the Mediator. When his people are called and his family complete, then the world will be destroyed.

And it is because of this gracious arrangement *the gospel is preached* to all nations and a sincere invitation is extended to all who will come.

Faith

The medium by which the gospel becomes the power of God is *faith*. Faith is a reliance upon the Lord Jesus Christ for all the blessings, benefits, ends, and purposes for which the gospel reveals him; such as pardon of sin, peace of conscience, strength for obedience, and eternal life.

Faith is wrought in us by the Holy Spirit through his Word, and presupposes a knowledge of Christ and of ourselves; of our emptiness and his fullness; of our unworthiness and his merits; of our weakness and his power.

The true believer believes, receives, and builds upon the person and Word of Christ as the only foundation of his hope. He enters by Christ as the only door to the knowledge, communion, and love of God. He feeds upon Christ as the only bread of life. He embraces only

Christ as his redemption, wisdom, and sanctification. He derives all his strength and comfort from only him.

By the Grace of God, I am What I am

While we rejoice in God's mercy which has saved us, in the blood of Christ which cleanseth us, and in the faith with which he has blessed us, let us always remember that we cannot stand a moment longer than God upholds us. We are like a walking cane in a man's hand; take away the hand and the cane will fall to the ground. We are like a small infant held up by a mother's arms; if we are left on our own, we shall immediately fall.

The flesh says, "I shall fail;" the world says, "I will deceive you;" the devil says, "I will sweep him away;" but God says, "I will keep him; I will *never forsake him.*"

We desire inward holiness. We long to glorify Christ in our conduct and conversation. We strive to adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour; but, always before us is the truth—*by the grace of God, I am what I am!*

Religion Versus Truth

The true believer has conflict with the religious world. The greatest enemies of Christ have always been those who boasted of their knowledge of God. It was in the synagogue that the death of Christ was plotted. It was in the cathedrals that the reformers were tried and burned. It is in the churches and seminaries that the gospel of grace is denied.

The Obedience of Christ

By an active and passive obedience before the Law of God, Christ has made sure for every believer all the promises of God. They are ours *in him, by him, through him, and for his glory.*

Trials

“Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you as though some strange thing happened unto you” (1 Peter 4:12).

“My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into different trials; knowing this, that the trial of your faith worketh patience” (James 1:2-3).

David said, “It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes.” Martin Luther declared, “I never knew the true meaning of God’s Word until I came into affliction. I have always found trials to be the best schoolmaster.”

1. Real trial touches us *personally*—our flesh, our hearts, our homes, our children! This is not something we read about concerning others and offer high-blown advice, but something we *experience*.

2. Real trial goes to *the root of the matter* and reveals the truth of our nature. It shows whether repentance, faith, love for Christ, and confidence in his purpose and providence are realities or pretense. Trials do not produce faith; trials reveal the faith that is there or they reveal the sham and hypocrisy that is there.

3. Real trial tests *a man’s graces*. We talk of love for one another, but not until real trial comes can we be sure that we do love. We talk of forgiveness and mercy, but not until forgiveness is needed and mercy is required can we be sure that we have it to give! Some of the best religious *talkers* are the poorest *doers* when it comes to putting their theology into practice.

4. Real trial gives us *an opportunity to minister to others*. First, by equipping us with necessary abilities. None can enter into a brother's sorrow like one who has actually been in the same situation. Second, by bringing us to the brother's side at this particular time. "I'm sorry that you are burdened in such a way, but I rejoice that the Lord affords me the *opportunity and privilege* of helping you bear your burden."

My brethren, don't fumble the opportunity to relieve the distressed, forgive the fallen, or feed the hungry. You just may not pass this way again.

Read immediately Matthew 25:41-46.

John Gill's Last Words to a Nephew

"I depend wholly and alone upon the free, sovereign, eternal, unchangeable love of God; the firm and everlasting covenant of grace; and my interest in the persons of the Trinity for my whole salvation; and not upon any righteousness of my own, nor on anything in me, or done by me under the influence of the Holy Spirit; nor upon any service of mine, which I have been assisted to perform for the good of the church do I depend; but upon my interest in the persons of the Trinity, the free grace of God, and the blessings of grace streaming to me through the blood and righteousness of Christ, as the ground of my hope.

"These are no new things to me, but what I have been long acquainted with and what I can live and die by! I apprehend that I shall not be long here, but this you may tell to any of my friends."

And he added, "I have nothing to make me uneasy,

He raised me from the depths of sin,
The gates of gaping hell;
And fixed my standing more secure
Than 'twas before I fell."

A Few Last Words from Ebenezer Erskine

A friend, calling on Ebenezer Erskine during his last illness, said to him, “Sir, you have preached to others all these years; what are you now doing with your own soul?”

“I am doing with it,” he replied, “what I did forty years ago; I am resting on God’s Word, which says, ‘I am the Lord thy God’; and, on this, I mean to die.”

To another he said, “The covenant of grace is my charter; and if it had not been for his grace in Christ, my hope and strength would perish.”

When Doctrine Becomes Experience

John 12:41 says, “When Isaiah saw his glory, he spake of him.” This is when doctrine becomes experience, ceremony and rituals give way to hearts communion, and the form of prayer is replaced by praise, thanksgiving and intercession. When we are enabled to see the glory of his grace, his election, his incarnation, his holiness, his justice, his intercession, and his glorious return, we will not only *spea*k of him, but we will *think* of him, *rejoice* in him, and *live* for his glory!

This sight of Christ’s person and work, in all his redemptive glory, is not one that natural eyes can see; but it is beheld as the Spirit of God, using the Word of God, awakens us to our need and his sufficiency.

1. When we learn of what happened in the garden and the consequences of that dreadful fall, we will see the glory of *his grace* to the sons of men.

2. When we learn of our total inability and the impossibility of our ever coming to Christ apart from divine assistance, we will see the glory of *his election*. Election is not just a doctrine; it is a necessity.

3. When we learn something of the corruption of the flesh and the sinfulness of our nature, we will see the glory of *his incarnation*. “The Word was made flesh.” What a wonder! What a mystery!

4. When we learn of the holiness and strictness of his divine law, we will see the glory of *his obedience*. “He knew no sin.” “By his obedience many were made righteous.”

5. When we learn of the true wrath of God against sin and the unchanging justice of our holy God, we will see the glory of *his death*.

6. When we learn of the sinfulness of our best deeds and the evil in our best works, we will see the glory of *his intercession*!

Pray for one Another

In 1 Thessalonians 5:25 the apostle makes a simple, yet all-important request; “Brethren, pray for us.” There is no more important area of the believer’s life than prayer. We dare not set one duty against another, but in what way can one better serve another than to diligently, sincerely, and lovingly intercede for one another before the throne of grace?

Samuel considered it a sin *not* to pray for his friends. “Moreover as for me, God forbid that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you” (1 Sam. 12:23).

I know that public prayer is an important part of our worship; but the prayer and intercession I encourage here is that personal, secret, and Spirit-led prayer which springs from genuine love and concern for one another. From the pastor to the youngest member, let us love one another with a fervent love and pray for one another every day.

Jesus Christ Himself

If Christianity is the mere invention of men, an opiate of the people, or a foolish desire for a happy hunting ground, how do you explain Jesus Christ?

1. His existence in history men cannot deny. He lived in this world. He was born in Bethlehem, walked this earth, died on a Roman cross, and witnesses claim that he arose from the grave.

2. Without force or bribery, without arms or money, without an earthly kingdom or great possessions, he left a mark on this world as no other person in all of history! He never wrote a book, yet no library is sufficient to hold the books written about him. He never wrote a song, yet he has been the theme of more songs than all others combined.

3. All other religious leaders came to live; he came to die! All other messiahs chose as their followers the rich, powerful, and influential; he chose the poor, the despised, and the rejected. All other messiahs say, "Follow me, I'll show you the way." He said, "Follow me, I AM the way." All others claim to be messengers of God; he said, "I and the Father are one." All others stay dead; he arose and all his claims, promises, and work depend on his resurrection.

How do you explain Jesus Christ?

True Repentance

True repentance has something to do with changing a man's *heart*! When his heart is broken toward God, his habits will conform to his state of heart.

True repentance produces a proper *attitude* toward God, towards his commandments, and toward others; this, in turn, results in actions which adorn the gospel.

True repentance works on the *mind* and the *motives* of believers, thus resulting in manners becoming the grace of God. This was why our Lord said, “Cleanse first that which is within.”

It is impossible to reverse the procedure. Let us seek and pray for true conversion and repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.

No Place of Repentance

It is said of Esau that “he found no place of repentance [way to change his mind], though he sought it carefully with tears.”

Hebrews 12:17

The birthright which Esau treated with contempt and sold for a mere morsel of meat was more than the greater part of his father’s estate. The birthright was also a *spiritual position*—God’s man in the family. It carried with it spiritual blessings and divine favor. But Esau’s desires were sensual and fleshly, so he threw aside the favor of God to satisfy his current desires, designs, and appetite. And when it came time for him to inherit the blessings, he was rejected and began to weep over his folly—too late.

Shall we be so foolish as to consider that anything the world may offer us is worth departing from the fellowship of the Lord and the gospel of his free grace? Those who are so foolish as to allow anything in this life to cause them to renounce their faith in Christ and leave the fellowship of Christ will, like Esau, someday weep bitter tears when it is impossible to recover that which is gone forever!

How to Hear a Sermon

Quite often, after a sermon is over, people are heard to say, “Preacher, you sure stepped on my toes today,” or, “My, my, the

preacher sure skinned us today.” Somehow, I feel that this type of response to the preaching of God’s Word indicates that there is something wrong with either the preaching or the hearing. When one can lightly pass off the profound mysteries of the gospel of God’s mercy with such meaningless comments, either he has not heard the glorious good news, or it has not been properly presented.

When the Master preached to his disciples, they said, “Didn’t our *hearts* burn within us while he opened to us the Scriptures?” When Peter preached at Pentecost, it is said, “They were pricked in their *hearts* and cried, ‘Men and brethren, what shall we do?’” When Paul turned to the Gentiles with the gospel, the Scripture says, “They were glad and *glorified the word of the Lord.*” This is so different from departing from the assembly with the flippant remark, “Well, he sure stepped on my toes.”

There is a duty to be performed *before* the sermon, *during* the sermon, and *after* the sermon. My responsibility is to get a message from the Lord, bathe it in prayer and preparation, and seek the fullness of God’s Spirit. Your responsibility *before* the sermon is to pray for me and prepare your heart to hear the Word. Coming into God’s presence is no light matter; it is a most serious business. *During* the sermon let every one hear with attention, interest, and an open heart. *After* the sermon let every individual seek to apply the Word to both heart and life by retaining the preached Word in thought and conversation.

The Bereans heard the apostles and then *searched* the Word to see if these things be so! Our Lord condemned the Pharisees, saying, “My Word hath no place in you” (Jn. 8:37). Let’s give his Word the place it merits—*first place!* He has graciously promised to bless that Word to his glory and to our eternal good!

Take Heed How You Hear

You will never be filled with grace nor grow in grace if you care not *whom* you hear nor *what* you hear. “Faith cometh by hearing, and

hearing by the Word of God” (Rom. 10:17). Misery awaits the man who builds his hope on anything but God’s Word!

The Day of Judgement

I can imagine the day of judgement; all are gathered before the throne of God. Those who are robed in the perfect robe of Christ’s righteousness are gathered to his right hand. The rest wait to hear his voice of condemnation, “Depart from me!”

Does anyone have anything to say? If there be one who has no sin, let him step forth and say so. Come forth, my friend, and state your case! What about the righteousness and holiness in which you boasted while on earth? Come forward and tell about your works, your gifts, your denomination; you found much comfort in those things once.

You who scoffed at substitution, who laughed at free grace, imputed righteousness, and covenant mercies—you are not laughing now! You never trembled before, but always had so much confidence in your decision, and boasted of being as sure for heaven as if you were already there! Why do you not tell God what you did for him on earth? It is quite evident that he did nothing for you.

But I remember that you said, “God has done all that he could do and salvation is up to you.” What a terrible time to discover what you should have known; “Salvation is of the Lord!” “Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us.”

Why do you not speak? Is it because of the awesome, infinite *holiness of his presence*? You clutch your righteous garments about you and they are nothing but filthy rags now, and you know it! You think of your prayers, your religious activities, your debates over doctrine, and they are all so much rubbish in the light of his presence.

And now you are praying? What is it that you cry? “O rocks and mountains, fall on me, and hide me from the face of him that sits upon

the throne.” I wish that you had cried as fervently for Christ to hide you, cleanse you, and cover you—*he would have!*

The King’s Highway

Never a *prayer* ascended to God save through the Lord Jesus Christ. Never has a *blessing* come down to man save through the same Divine Mediator. There is now a *highway of holiness* on which the redeemed can walk with God and God can come to us.

The King’s highway is Jesus Christ—the way, the truth, and the life. I urge you to believe on and trust in the Lord Jesus. The reason why we cannot come to God except through Christ is that, though God is love, mercy, and grace, we are unholy and impure. His holy eye cannot endure iniquity. God is just and his justice cannot tolerate sin. Therefore, we must have a God-appointed advocate. That advocate is his own well-beloved Son, who is our wisdom, righteousness, redemption, and sanctification.

Sinner, come to God in Christ! Come and welcome!

Eternal Life

When we hear the expression *eternal life*, many suppose that we speak of heaven or of life after death. We certainly do, but *eternal life* begins right here. It is not a future experience, but it begins in the believer as soon as he is born again. We have the same spiritual life now in Christ that we shall enjoy throughout eternity!

Our Strength is Christ

How faint the best praise! How wandering the best prayer! How selfish the best gift! When we feel that we are nearest to God, how far

off we are! When we feel that we are most like God, how unlike God we are!

What did the apostle say? “When I am weak, then am I strong.” Our strength is always Christ, never in anything we are or do!

The Lord Has Heard Us...Shall we not Then Speak?

I cried unto the Lord with my voice, and He heard me out of his holy hill.

Psalm 3:4

The Lord heard me when I cried for mercy in Christ. He abundantly pardoned my sins and gave me a good hope through grace. He has heard my voice in prayer every day and so graciously blessed and supplied every need. If he is not pleased to grant another earthly blessing, I can still say that I have been the object of special love and favor. This being the case, I want to learn *three lessons*:

1. He shall hear my voice *in praise*! If he has heard me pray, then he shall hear me give thanks. If he has heard me when tears were in my eyes, then he shall hear my voice of thanksgiving when my eyes laugh and rejoice. My communion with God shall not be confined to the sickbed and the dungeons of despair.

2. He has heard my voice; then *I shall hear his voice*! What did the prophet say? “Speak Lord, for thy servant heareth” (1 Sam. 3:10). How foolish is the man who would talk to God in prayer but seldom takes down the blessed Word of God that he may hear God speak to him. May God ever deliver us from pride of grace, for all that we are or have is his gift and work. But I do believe his infallible, inspired Word means more to me now than ever before. I find all that I need in this divine book. Feeding upon it gives me hope, strength, and grace; neglecting it leaves me empty and depressed.

3. I have talked to God about my friends, and he heard me; then I shall *talk to my friends about God*: perhaps they will hear.

“I will tell to sinners round,
What a dear Saviour I have found.”⁴⁰

Is it possible that we cannot name one person whom we have brought to hear the gospel or been the instrument used by the Spirit of God to give them the good news of Christ?

Do not be Distracted by Matters of Dispute

I was greatly impressed, while reading Mr. Spurgeon this week, by a statement he made regarding those who spend most of their life trying to resolve the deep and mysterious theological questions. He said, “There is the puzzling problem concerning the origin of evil. I am not so much concerned about how evil came into the world as about helping to get it out! Common sense seems to say ‘If there is a thief in the house, let us catch him, deal with him, and get him out; after that we will try to find out how he got in!’ Our Lord did not come into the world to tell us where sin came from, but by the sacrifice of himself to put it away.”

It has for centuries been a great temptation to many talented men to spend their time studying, arguing, and quarreling over sovereignty and responsibility, Sabbath days and church government, prophetic speculation and future events, when they would have been better employed and more greatly used of God in preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ.

It certainly does not harm us to sharpen our minds; to consider the mysteries of God, to inquire into that which is written, revealed and unrevealed; but, our powers are limited, our gifts are limited, and our time is limited. Let us sound a clear, positive note concerning that

⁴⁰ Cennick, John. *Jesus, My All, to Heaven is Gone*. Sacred Hymns for the Use of Religious Societies. 1743.

which God has made known without doubt; “He that hath the Son hath life, he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.”

A man can be saved and not know whether he is a pre, post, or a-millennialist, but a man cannot be saved who does not know Christ. A man can be saved without a love for T.U.L.I.P, but he cannot be saved without a love for Christ. A man can be saved who refuses the lordship of elders, but a man cannot be saved who refuses the lordship of Christ. A man can be saved who does not enter into the rest of your Sabbath, but a man cannot be saved who has not ceased from his labors and entered into the rest of Christ.

There is Only One Mediator

If I bow my knee before Mary, before a man on earth, or seek the intercession of any created being except the one person ordained of God to be *The Mediator* between God and men, I rob Christ of his greatness and glory.

God has one Mediator, Jesus Christ, because man needs a mediator. And he has no more mediators because none other is needed or required. You may come to Christ as you are, for he came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.

I Dared to Call him Father

Bilguis Sheikh, a Muslim woman, described how she truly found the Lord. She had been brought up in the religion of Islam, in which God is pictured as a distant, faraway, stern figure to whom one has the duty to submit but never know. She came to Christ and discovered to her great joy the God and Father of our Lord Jesus.

She wrote her story in a book and the title of the book sums up the wonderful reality which she found out about the Lord God. It is called *I Dared to Call him Father*.

Knowing God is not a religion of slavish fear; it is a deep, holy, and joyful relationship with the Father in Christ. “You did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave to fear, but you received *the spirit of sonship*, and by him we cry, Abba, Father” (Rom. 8:15).

Abba is an Aramaic word for “daddy.”

The Good News of What God Has Done

Inquirers are often counseled to *give their hearts to Christ*, or to *consecrate themselves to the Lord*, or to *accept Jesus as their personal Saviour*. I would not be over-critical with what is sometimes meant well, but this is not the gospel!

The good news of God’s grace is that God hath given to us eternal life and redemption through the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. Salvation is totally and completely of the Lord. It is not something we do for God or even something we cooperate with God in doing for ourselves; but, from beginning to end, the work of redemption, sanctification, and glorification is God’s gift to us *in Christ*. We receive him, we believe him, we look to him; and, in so doing, all the blessings of life flow to us in him.

Having received Christ, having become a partaker of his converting grace, and having received a new nature, we delight in his law and his fellowship. We long to be like him in conduct, conversation, and attitude. We long to adorn the gospel of his free grace by being gracious and grateful.

A Sure Hope

Concerning the character of God, what gross mistakes men make! I believe the root and foundation of all error in theology comes from ignorance of the character and attributes of God himself. Arminian theology makes God out to be less than he is. Men receive false

doctrine because they do not have a clear understanding of the omnipotence, holiness, immutability, or sovereignty of God.

If God is given his rightful place we will, like Isaiah, see his holiness and our sinfulness and cry out, “Woe is me! I am cut off!” (Is. 6:5). The necessity of a suitable mediator, a sufficient sacrifice, and a God-honoring righteousness will become evident. 1 Corinthians 1:30 (“But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption...”) will take on a new and essential meaning.

The greatness, importance, and power of your religion depend entirely on the greatness, glory, and power of *your God*. The depth of a man’s worship depends on the majesty and greatness of the God he worships. The strength of a man’s faith depends on the power and ability of the God he believes. Abraham believed God that “*he was able*” to perform all that he promised (Rom. 4:21).

The peace and rest a man enjoys depend on his confidence in the God who controls the flight of an angel or a fly; the flash of lightning or the glimmer of a glowworm. The assurance of redemption and hope of eternal life that a man enjoys depend not upon his works, faithfulness, nor his own righteousness, but on the sufficient, effectual obedience and substitutionary death of the one Redeemer, Jesus Christ, who cannot fail in all that he undertook as surety and representative of his elect, given to him by the Father.

Give me a sovereign, omnipotent Lord of heaven and earth, with authority over all the universe of men and angels, and I will preach to you a *sure hope* of mercy and grace!

The Love of God is Seen Inside the Ark

I have often reminded people of what a ridiculous thing it would have been if Noah had put one of our bumper stickers on the *outside* of the ark, which says, “Smile, God loves you.” But my son, Paul, called one fact to my attention—that this sign could have been

stamped all over the *inside* of the ark; for those in the ark were certainly the objects of God's love.

His love chose them, redeemed them from destruction, and preserved them, just as his love in Christ chose, redeemed, and preserves all his elect. "Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord."

The Trying of Faith

Trials and afflictions do not make us what we are; they *reveal* what we are. Trials (however light or severe) do not *produce* faith; they *reveal* faith! How a man reacts to the providence of God reveals his thoughts toward God and his true relationship with the Lord.

The sun melts the ice and hardens the clay. The effect produced on each is determined by the *nature* of the object. The soldier who lays down his weapon and flag under fire was never a soldier *in heart*, but only wore the uniform in the parade. He is called a deserter and is held up to ridicule and shame. "Though he slay me, yet will I trust him!" (Job 13:15).

Religion Without Christ

Without Christ crucified, religion is no more than pagan ritualism. All religions have their messiahs, ceremonies, laws, rewards, and punishments. Only the gospel has a crucified, risen, ascended Redeemer. Beware of any hope of the favor of God, acceptance with God, or forgiveness from God apart from the obedience and blood of Christ.

"When the Saviour said, 'Tis finished,
Everything was fully done;
Done as God himself would have it—
Christ the victory won."⁴¹

⁴¹ Midlane, Albert. *Believe and Live*. No. 535 C.H. Spurgeon's Our Own Hymnbook. London: Passmore and Alabaster, 1862.

Christian Unity

I beseech you that you walk worthy of the vocation wherewith you are called. . . forbearing one another in love; endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

Ephesians 4:1-3

There are no two churches, preachers, nor Christians who agree on every point of doctrine, every point of church government, discipline and practice, every point of the law and Christian liberty, nor every program, missionary, and effort to be supported. Someday we will all be like Christ, having the perfect understanding, thoughts, and discernment of our Lord; but, *until then*, each church, pastor, and believer can only walk and act as the Word of God and the Holy Spirit give them light and leadership.

When we sit about in private conversation and criticize one another, write sharp articles and letters, or take shots at one another from the pulpit, we serve the purpose of the enemy of God, reveal our self-righteousness, and seriously damage the unity of believers.

If we love Christ's church, if we love the servants of God, if we seek only the glory of God and long to see his kingdom prosper in every city where he has established a witness for the gospel of grace, let us refuse to be drawn into this terrible practice of "biting and devouring one another." Paul warned these critics and examiners of others that "they would be consumed one of another" (Gal. 5:14-15).

Criticism and fault-finding are not of the Spirit of Christ and reveal a poor understanding of our own natures and the grace of God in Christ! "By *this* shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if you *love* one another" (Jn. 13:35).

Sanctification

In sanctification, do we wash and cleanse ourselves? No, it is grace that does it. It is the beauty of the Lord our God; we are holy and beautiful through the righteousness he puts upon us.

Grace is laying aside our flimsy fig leaves and putting on the holiness of Christ. Works is laying aside the righteousness of Christ and reaching for our fig leaves. Let the filthy leaves be despised and forgotten, for we are “*accepted* in the Beloved” in all that we need and in all that he requires!

The Name of The Lord Jesus Christ

Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.

Acts 16:31

What we are to believe is clearly set forth in the *name* of the Lord Jesus Christ! His character, his office, his redemptive work, and his glory are all declared in the name *The Lord Jesus Christ*.

1. *The Lord* declares his deity, eternity, and authority. We bow before him and cry with Thomas, “*My Lord* and my *God*” (Jn. 20:28).

2. *Jesus* is his name of humiliation, humanity, obedience, and death. We know that he was identified and numbered with the transgressors that he might *in all things* be our faithful High Priest.

3. *Christ*—Yes, Jesus is the Christ! “Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ?” (1 Jn. 2:22).

When we understand all which is included in *that name*, we see more clearly what Paul meant when he said, “Whosoever shall call upon *the name* of the Lord shall be saved” (Rom. 10:13).

Holiness of Life

The first argument for holiness of life is that if you know Christ, our Lord, is righteous and obedient to the Father's will in action, thought, and words, you also know that those who are begotten of him (in like manner) will seek to be like him in righteousness and obedience to the Father's will.

To be born of God is to have the nature of God, the grace of God, and the presence of Christ formed in us, causing us to love and desire the will and ways of God! "If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him" (1 Jn. 2:29).

Give no Advantage to the Enemy

It is perfectly evident to all who know the grace of God in Christ that we have spent this past [conference] week under the favor of God and have been especially blessed with his presence and power. As far as I can determine, every service, every message, and every song honored Christ and blessed his people. This church can give special thanks to the Lord for giving us *the privilege* of hosting such a conference and entertaining his people from all over the world.

I would not sound a blue note nor discourage you, particularly at this time, when the church seems to be in such harmony and unity and rejoicing in the blessings of the Lord; but, these are the times when we need to be aware of, and on guard against, the attacks of Satan.

Where God blesses, Satan rears up his ugly head. When God manifests his mercies, Satan usually organizes some form of opposition or trouble. Paul wrote of this in II Corinthians 2:11, "To keep Satan from getting the advantage over us; for we are not ignorant of his wiles and intentions" (Amplified Version).

He is the enemy, not men or movements; but he is the great antichrist. He will use even the Apostle Peter for his purposes. And if that be true, only the grace of God will keep him from using you and

me to trouble the family of God. Let our prayers be most diligent in this area, “Deliver us from the evil one!” (Mt. 6:13).

Let not Satan get the advantage and destroy that which glorifies our great God. Let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto the Lord Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith.

To See His Glory

When Isaiah saw his glory, he spake of him.

John 12:41

When a man sees the glory of the Redeemer, *Christ becomes his message*. Everything else fades into insignificance before the glory of Jesus Christ; his creative glory, his incarnate glory, his redemptive glory, his resurrected glory, his mediatorial glory, and his coming glory.

When we see his glory, we will speak in *humility*, “Woe is me.” We will speak of *our sins*, “I am a man of unclean lips.” We will speak in *obedience*, “Here am I, send me.” We will make known his greatest glory, “He was wounded for our transgressions, and by his stripes we are healed.”

“I am determined,” Paul said, “to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.” Paul had seen his glory, too. I may be accused of having only one message and playing a one-string fiddle—so be it! I have seen his glory, therefore everything else is vanity.

My one desire is that you see it, and the only way you will see his glory is for us to preach it!

Trouble in the Flesh

John Bunyan once said, “A believer is seldom long at ease; when one trial is gone, another doth him seize.”⁴² We can be sure that when we are on the mountain top, the valley is not far away. We have many joys, but we must have afflictions. The apostle called it, “trouble in the flesh” (1 Cor. 7:28).

Sometimes these troubles come from our family relationships. Those whose lives are interwoven with ours *naturally* cause us great grief *spiritually*. Christ said, “A man’s enemies will be those of his own household” (Mt. 10:36). How can it be otherwise? The people of this world never did understand the people of God and they never will. “Light came into the world and the *darkness comprehended it not*” (Jn. 3:19). How can darkness do anything to light but oppose it? Light and darkness can’t mix; oil and water will not mix; and it cannot be expected that the believer shall have peace with the unbeliever, whether they live across the street or in the same house.

When King David came home from that high and holy adventure with God, when he brought the ark back to the tabernacle, who should meet him at the door with sarcasm, criticism, and ridicule but his own wife! When I look at David singing and dancing before the ark, how happy he is! How filled with the joy of the Lord! But I know what is ahead and so do you. And it will hurt more because it will come from the most unexpected source—his own dear wife! Satan works in this manner; “*wounded in the house of my friends*” (Zech. 13:6).

Husbands, wives, children, parents, and close friends who do not know our Lord and his sovereign, free, and redeeming grace will not help us on our heavenly journey but will do all they can do to wound and hurt. This, too, we will endure and accept as the good providence of the Lord!

⁴² Spurgeon, Charles H. *A Bottle in the Smoke*. Sermon no. 71. New Park Street Pulpit. Vol. 2. London: Passmore and Alabaster, 1856.

Cain and Abel

When we read the story of these two men, it is evident that they had much in common. They had the same parents. They were both born and raised outside the garden. Both had received the same religious instructions. Both came to worship and brought offerings to God. But they differed in their understanding of God's character, the nature of sin, and the way to approach God.

All men and women are much the same. The natural differences are superficial. We may differ in our *acts* of sin, but there is no difference as to the *fact* of sin!

This difference in understanding led these men to bring different sacrifices to God. Abel, evidently aware of God's instructions, in faith and godly fear, brought a slain lamb, typical of the blood of Christ. In this sacrifice, Abel confessed he was worthy of death and that without the shedding of blood there was no forgiveness of sin nor approach to God. Cain's offering of his own works, the fruit of the ground (that which God had cursed), denied his guilt and professed that he was righteous. Abel trusted the Lord; Cain trusted in his works. O, what a difference!

Abel is a type of the believer in salvation by grace through faith in Christ. Cain is a type of the religious of all generations and persuasions who seek God's favor by their own doings.

Hard Hearts

Men's hearts are spiritually hard. The world can win a man's heart, gold can win a man's heart, fame and popularity can win a man's heart; but there is not a minister living who can win a man's heart to God.

We can reach the eye, the ear, and the head, but not the heart. The poet said,

“Speak with that voice that wakes the dead,

And bid the sleeper rise,
And bid his guilty conscience dread
The death that never dies.”⁴³

Preach to the Whole Man

There is a danger of talking more about salvation than about the Saviour. There is a danger of preaching redemption and neglecting to preach the Redeemer. It could be that we know much about justification and little about Jesus Christ, his person and his work. One thing is certain—a man will arrive at right doctrine through Christ, but it is also possible for him to have orthodox doctrine and yet not know Christ. The gospel is not a collection of dry doctrines; it is the revelation of a living, merciful, and ever-present Lord.

Men and women are not going to come to hear you preach “the doctrines of grace.” But if needy sinners get wind of the fact that you are preaching “the grace of Christ,” they will give you a hearing. When you only preach to my head in facts so numerous and terms so tedious, you weary me, and forget that I am a human with emotions and a hungry *heart*! I laugh, I cry, I love, I feel, I sorrow, I doubt, I fear, and I need a minister with whom I can identify in all these, who has the message of God’s mercy; not cold, calculated creeds which ignore these human traits.

The Arminian cheerleader sings joyful hymns, weeps, laughs, rejoices, and calls for men to commit themselves to a movement with *no* message of hope nor assurance. The Calvinistic professor stands rigidly in his pulpit of pious orthodoxy, daring not to weep lest he be called emotional, daring not to laugh lest he be thought frivolous, daring not to call mourners or seekers lest he be called a free-willer, daring not to let people know him or get close to him lest he lose their respect and awe. Someone may find out he is only a sinner saved by grace.

⁴³ Wesley, Charles. *Thou Son of God, Whose Flaming Eyes*. Hymns for the Use of Families. London: 1767.

“Lord, deliver me from having to listen to either one of them, and send me an Elijah of like passions who will minister to my heart and to my head—to the whole man.”

Three Things

Three things a believer should labor to maintain:

the honor and glory of *God*;
the honor and truth of *the gospel*;
and the integrity of his own *name and character*.

Just a Greeting Card

In the morning mail, there was a different shaped envelope, not like your standard letter but with the name and address properly written. Inside was a brightly colored card which said something like, “Happy Birthday, may this and all of your future days be blessed with the mercies and love of our God.” But, to me, that little greeting card said *much more!* Its message went far beyond its printed words and entitled that card to be received and handled with special attention.

1. That card says someone *thinks of you* even when you are not with them.

2. That card says someone *loves you and cares enough about you* to give you a part of his day; enough to go to the store, look through cards, and find one that will convey his thoughts and best wishes to you; enough to sit down, address it, and carry it to the mailbox.

3. That card says that you *have a friend*. You are not alone. You are appreciated for who you are and what you have done.

4. That card carries with it a wish, a desire, or a *prayer for your well-being* and prosperity in soul and body.

My conclusion: never treat a card, a note, or a letter with anything but the tenderest of care and respond as soon as you can; for it brings to you a part of the sender.

A Real Friend

A real friend can make your way a little smoother, your burden a little lighter, your heart a little warmer, and your day a little brighter.

Pray and Stay

Someone said, “Two little words are good for every believer to learn and to practice—*pray* and *stay!*” We have enough exhortation and encouragements in the Scriptures to pray without ceasing, about everything, and in the spirit of thanksgiving, that I do not need to elaborate on this.

But *patience* and *perseverance* in trial, in place of service, in faithfulness to worship, the gospel, and our calling are so needful! *Stay*—wait on the Lord. God is in no hurry because he is all-wise and almighty.

We have a way of wanting everything to be done within the hour, and not to accomplish it right away discourages us. “I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. Wait on the Lord: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the Lord” (Ps. 27:13-14).

Christ Must Have the Preeminence!

Christ Jesus is first in *all things*. He must have the preeminence! He has all authority in heaven and earth. He has the glory before time, in time, and after time. He is the cause of all that’s done in this world in the world to come.

When the Scripture says, “He is the first fruits of them that rise again” (1 Cor. 15:20), it is saying that God chose Christ and then he chose us. God justified Christ by his resurrection, thereby justifying us because he bore our sins and was numbered with the transgressors.

We will rise again because he is risen. Christ ascended and we will ascend. Christ is first loved; we are loved in the Beloved. Christ is first blessed, and we have all spiritual blessings in him. He is the first and the last—Alpha and Omega, the author and finisher of our faith.

“All hail the power of Jesus’ Name!
Let angels prostrate fall;
Bring forth the royal diadem,
And crown him Lord of all.”⁴⁴

Preach the Truth No Matter What

Everyone is aware of the popularity of Mr. Spurgeon among today’s preachers. He is read, quoted, and referred to by preachers of all denominations and persuasions. It was not so when he was alive and preaching in London. He once wrote to a friend, “Scarcely a Baptist minister of standing will own me!”⁴⁵ In another letter, he commented that “contemporary preachers *are afraid of real gospel Calvinism*.”⁴⁶ The famous preacher, Thomas Binney, heard Spurgeon preach in 1855 and declared, “I never heard *such things* in all my life before.”⁴⁷

It is heartbreaking and disappointing to be shunned and criticized and misrepresented by those who profess to know Christ, especially

⁴⁴ Perronet, Edward. *All Hail the Power of Jesus’ Name*. Union Harmony or Universal Collection of Sacred Music. Boston: 1793.

⁴⁵ Spurgeon, Charles H. *The Autobiography of Charles H. Spurgeon Compiled From his Diary, Letter, and Records by His Wife and His Private Secretary*. Vol.2 1854-1860. New York: Fleming H. Revel Company. 1899. Reprinted by Banner of Truth Trust. 1962.

⁴⁶ Ray, Charles. *The Life of Charles Haddon Spurgeon*. London: Passmore and Alabaster. 1903.

⁴⁷ *Ibid*.

by those who are supposed to be fellow ministers for the glory of Christ. But the old truth that Paul preached, that which the reformers preached, and that which Spurgeon preached is the truth that I must also preach or else be false to my conscience, my God, and my hearers. We have no right to tamper with the gospel of his glory—nor do we have permission to tone down the truth, to pare off the rough edges of a doctrine, to rob the gospel of its offense, or to use methods, literature, and “silence” to “get along” with today’s religionists!

Unfortunately, much of the opposition to those who dare to preach what they believe (sometimes at a high cost) comes from those who are not willing to pay the price. A preacher once said to another, “*I do not see election and predestination.*” The man took a piece of money, laid it over the word election, and said, “It’s even harder to see now, isn’t it?”

Looking at the Word through our ambitions, possessions, and general welfare surely does make some things “hard to see.”

Wait on the Lord

When we are tempted to complain and find fault with the good providence of our Lord, it would do well for us to read the Scripture in Habakkuk 3:17-18, “Though the fig tree does not blossom, and there be no fruit on the vines, though the product of the olive fail, and though the fields yield no food, though the flock be cut off from the fold, and there be no cattle in the stalls, *yet I will rejoice in the Lord; I will exult in the victorious God of my salvation*” (Amplified Version).

Also, the words of Job, “Though he slay me, *yet will I trust him*” (Job 13:15). Because the water is not gushing forth at the rate we desire, there is no reason to forsake the *only fountain*. David insisted on our waiting on the Lord, “for *he shall* strengthen our hearts” (Ps. 24:14).

Good things come to those who in faith wait on the Lord

A Word from Mr. Whitefield

A man cannot speak peace to his heart who has not, in his heart, come to rest in Christ the justifier, redeemer, sanctifier, and mediator.

Mr. Whitefield once said, “You have no reason to hope for peace until (to some degree) you have dealt with *sin*—what we *are* by birth and nature; with *sins*—what we *have done* in word, thought, and deed; with *unbelief*—the fountain of all sin; with *righteousness*—both our own (which is filthy rags) and his own (which is perfect); and Christ’s *Lordship*! Can a man claim Christ as Saviour who will not bow to Christ as Lord?”⁴⁸

Six Stubborn Statements

I realize, as much as any of you, that we are out of step with the great parade of religion today. I realize we are putting a question mark on some very successful religious organizations, and in conflict with all the major denominations. I realize that we are charging some popular, recognized, powerful, and hard-working preachers and religious leaders with failure to preach the true gospel of God’s glory and grace. We are charging them with the crime of preaching “another gospel.” This is serious; for Paul said, “If any man preach any other gospel, let him be accursed” (Gal. 1:8). I realize that we are a very small minority compared with the vast religious movement of this day. But, to me, the issues are as clear as the sun!

1. God is infinitely sovereign in all things, including salvation; or he isn’t sovereign at all.

2. Man, in the fall, was rendered spiritually dead, without hope, without God, without Christ, and is shut up to the power of God to give him life; or he is not dead at all.

⁴⁸ Paraphrased from George Whitefield’s sermon on Jeremiah 6:14 *The Method of Grace*. Found in the compilation *Select Sermons of George Whitefield*. Edited by J.C. Ryle. Reprinted by Banner of Truth. 1986.

3. God either elected a people to eternal salvation according to the good pleasure of his sovereign will, or he did not choose anyone, and has left the success of his purpose to save totally in the hands of the creature.

4. Christ either sufficiently, effectually, and eternally saved those for whom he died, by his obedience and death, or he actually saved no one! The ransom was no ransom at all, only an offer.

5. The eternal Spirit of God either effectually and powerfully quickens, regenerates, and calls the elect to repentance toward God and to faith in Christ, or extends an offer to all sinners to regenerate themselves. We must go back to the question, “Is man dead?”

6. All the elect of God will be preserved by his grace and will persevere in the faith of Christ; or none will. For, if left to ourselves, we shall eventually fall as all creatures have.

Carnal Religion

The peculiar, crowning feature of salvation by grace in Christ is that all of God’s work *begins within* and *bears fruit without*. Other religions—like that of the Pharisees—begin with outward form, rules, and duties, hoping that these things will commend us to God and motivate men to godliness.

Carnal religion gives men a day to keep, a tithe to pay, rules to obey, and duties to perform; but, our God, in regeneration, gives a sinner *a new heart, a new spirit*, and sheds abroad *the love of God within*. And this *always* results in an obedient and godly walk.

Surround a tiger with bars, whips, and rewards and he will do no harm; but, he is still a wild beast! However, give that tiger the nature of a lamb and you can remove the bars and lay down the whip.

A Note on Giving

Our church family has many things for which to be thankful! God has blessed us with a knowledge of his grace in Christ. He has given us a love for one another and a fellowship that is unsurpassed on this earth. He has favored us with his blessings on this assembly for 32 years, supplying our needs, allowing us to preach the gospel to thousands here and around the world by television, tapes, and the printed word, and giving us the privilege of helping to support some of his choice missionaries and traveling preachers.

He has raised up preachers from among us and sent them to preach and pastor his sheep. He has brought to our pulpit, for our congregation to hear, pastors from all over the world. He has permitted us to bring together and entertain his people in 30 Bible conferences.

Your faith, generosity, and message are spoken of throughout the world. The Lord continues to open doors for us to proclaim his Word and to encourage other pastors and churches. Let us give thanks, let us be humbled before our God, and let us not be wearied nor grow selfish regarding *our own things*.

If we are to glorify God, do his will, and minister to his people everywhere, we must do so with an open hand and heart. We cannot look only upon our own assembly, services, general welfare, and comfort. If we can say, "Lord, here are our pastor, our elders, and our young men; send them out to preach and teach. Here are our gifts; show us where to bestow them for your glory. Here is our building, our people, our equipment, and our time; let it all be used in the ministry of Christ our Lord, to call out and encourage his sheep." In doing so, God will continue to bless us as he has; for, our Lord said, "Give and it shall be given to you" (Lk. 6:38).

The Exalted Lord

Christ must be preached where he is now if we are to preach the gospel of his glory! Men will preach about, even accept, Christ as

prophet, teacher, healer, and even as Saviour; but, the preaching of Christ as sovereign Lord of lords and King of kings, men will not tolerate. If Christ is exalted at the right hand of God, everything else about him is easy to believe. His resurrection declared him to the Son of God; his exaltation declares him to be *Lord!* Peter closed his message in Acts 2 with these words; “God hath made this same Jesus, whom you crucified, to be both Lord and Christ.” This is the climax of true gospel preaching—*Jesus Christ is Lord!* God hath delivered all things, all authority, all judgement, and all revelation into his hands.

Christ must be preached where he is now if we are to correctly receive him and call upon his name! Romans 10:9 says, “If thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus to be Lord...thou shalt be saved.” Romans 10:13 says, “Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.” One cannot confess, call upon, or receive a false conception of Jesus Christ and be saved. He is not a pitiful, helpless exile waiting to see what will happen. He is the enthroned Lord who has all power over all flesh to give eternal life to as many as the Father hath given him.

Christ must be preached where he is now if we who believe on him are to have a good hope! I can have a good hope of salvation because my exalted Lord is able to save, to keep, and to raise my vile body. I can have a good hope of success in preaching the gospel because my exalted Lord has all authority in heaven and earth. I can have a good hope of living in heaven because my exalted Lord has entered and taken possession of that heavenly kingdom and wills for me to be with him and behold his glory!

The Chief Ignorance of Man

Most men know that there is a God. “They have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge” (Rom. 10:2). And their chief ignorance lies in the degree of his holiness and their sinfulness.

Sanctify the Lord God in Your Hearts

But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear.

I Peter 3:15

God is infinitely and perfectly holy. We do not make him so; but we regard, proclaim, and declare him to be our holy and sovereign Lord in two ways:

1. *Externally*. The Lord is sanctified by his people externally when they obey his Word, believe him, worship him, praise him, and call upon him.

2. *Internally*. This verse exhorts us to sanctify the Lord in *our hearts*. Unless we truly believe him, love him, and worship him in our hearts, all our outwards forms and claims are nothing but sham. It is mockery to talk of his glory with my lips if I do not bless God in my heart.

“Be ready to give an answer,” the apostle continues. When someone asks you to tell him why you believe that your sins are pardoned, that your name is in the Book of Life, and that you will enjoy the presence of Christ forever, be ready always to give a scriptural answer. It is because Christ Jesus is your *righteousness* before the law. Christ Jesus, by his death, is your *justification* and *redemption*, and Christ Jesus is your *mediator* before God’s throne!

“With meekness and fear.” Give that answer in a most humble fashion; for we are what we are by the grace of God, not because of anything that we are or have done. Give that answer in “the fear of the Lord,” being careful that he gets all the glory for his blessings. Also, give that answer courteously and respectfully; it may be the person is a true seeker of the Lord.

What Think Ye of Christ?

It is a tragedy that sensationalism will draw a religious crowd while substitution goes begging for an audience. But the true church of Christ will preach to prepare men to meet God, not to meet the arguments and obstacles of unusual religionists. “What think ye of Christ?” is still the question.

Faith in Christ

He that heareth my Word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life.

John 5:24

There are many false religious refuges in which men hide, and many false claims to a hope of glory which will be shattered at the judgement. One such refuge is religious orthodoxy and sound theology without a personal faith in—and commitment to—the Lord Jesus.

Saul of Tarsus was a student of the Scriptures, a man of high morality and integrity, a believer in the sovereignty of God and election (he believed the Jews were God’s elect). He fought for what he believed. But Saul had never been brought to a personal knowledge of Christ Jesus, an understanding of his person and work, and a genuine, open committal to Christ. The fact that he was one of the elect, that he would one day preach the gospel, that he would one day seal his testimony with his blood, did not alter the fact that he was a lost sinner who must *hear* the voice of God in his Word and *believe* on the Lord Jesus Christ.

You may be as orthodox as an old, studious Puritan and as sincere in your contention for the doctrines of grace as Calvin himself; but, if the Holy Spirit has not brought the Word of the gospel to your heart in conviction of your sin, sins, and righteous rags; if the Holy Spirit has not revealed (through the Word of God) Christ to your heart in

faith, committal, and love, you will hear Christ say to you, “Depart from me, I never knew you” (Mt. 7:23).

It is not faith in doctrine that saves, nor even faith in God’s power to save, but *faith in Christ!* Anyone who believes there is a God knows that being God enables him to do what he will! But what will God do? He will redeem men in Christ; he will love men in Christ; he will accept men in Christ; he will save all who are in Christ; and that not by election alone, but *by faith!* “Without faith it is impossible to please God” (Heb. 11:6). “He that *believeth not* shall be damned” (Mk. 16:16).

Once more I set before you the gospel of Jesus Christ and call upon you to believe *him*, look to *him*, and confess *him* publicly as *your Lord and Saviour!*

Do Not Waste That Which You Have Been Given

There is nothing that we have as children of God, whether in nature or grace, that is not the gift of God. As each of you has received a particular talent, endowment, or ability (whether physical, material, or spiritual), you are to use that gift or blessing as a faithful steward.

God did not give you what you have, or make you what you are, that you might consume it on your own lust or provide for your own comfort and satisfaction, but that you might serve his purpose, glorify his name, and help his people.

Let the beauty of Christ, the love of Christ, and the generosity and grace of Christ be seen in you!

Take Care How You Hear

You will never grow in grace if you care not *whom* you hear nor *what* you hear.

The Haves and the Have-Nots

He who has Christ, needs nothing more.

He who knows not and loves not Christ, enjoys nothing.

Bulletin Articles of Henry Mahan For the Year 1984

This is the Record

“This is the record,” declared the Apostle John; this is the sum and substance of all that is written and preached. God, out of his pure free-grace, is pleased to give unto us *eternal life*. This life is the spiritual life lost in the fall—life free from sin, sorrow, and death forever.

This life is in his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ! Not only purposed in him, promised through him, and purchased by him, but he *is that life!* (Col. 3:4)

He that hath the redeeming Christ, the interceding Christ, the indwelling Christ hath life!

Knowing God

God is *who he is* and God is *who he says he is*; therefore, a knowledge of God must come from him by divine revelation. Any true knowledge of the Lord God must be revealed to us by the Spirit of God, or we will perish in ignorance, worshipping the idols of our imagination, calling them God.

God is pleased to reveal himself in two ways; through his *Word* and through *his Son*. “God spoke to us by his Son” (Heb. 1:1-2). If you would know the true and living God, trust not your dreams, your visions, your thoughts, or your traditions; but look to his *Word* and to his *Son*.

“I and my Father are one; he that hath seen me hath seen the Father” (Jn. 14:9). Any thoughts or ideas of God which are contrary to the Word of God and the person of Jesus Christ are false and full of idolatry!

A Word on Stewardship

There are many warnings in the Scriptures to those who are rich. But perhaps one will say, “I am not rich nor likely to ever be rich.” Even so, we are still responsible on a smaller scale for what God put into our hands. Whether I have little or much, it all belongs to my Father, and I am resolved to use for his glory and the good of others!

It’s Easier to Wear A Cross than to Bear A Cross

This is the day of *instant religion*. It is the day of altar calls, public decisions, and accepting Jesus. There is little conviction, little or no repentance, and certainly no counting the cost. Men seem to want a refuge that requires no genuine commitment on their part and a religion which fits their lifestyle while also rewarding them with eternal happiness.

It is far less trouble to eat a wafer than to feed on the Bread of Life; less trouble to receive water on the brow than to seek the Fountain of Life; less trouble to walk an aisle than to walk the Calvary Road; less trouble to shake a preacher’s hand than to reach out like a beggar to the Redeemer; less trouble to tell the priest that you have sinned than to confess guilt before the throne; less trouble to be identified with the local denomination than to be identified with the crucified Christ; less trouble to wear a cross than to bear one!

What can we do for a generation that cries, “Peace, peace!” when there is no peace? What can we do? Preach the gospel of God’s grace

in Christ! God may be pleased to open an ear, an eye, and a heart here and there.

Beware of Hypocrisy

The very prayer that encourages you to pray for mercy instructs you to forgive. “Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.” There is no grace in the heart unwilling to overlook faults; there is no love in the heart which holds a grudge against others while asking God to forgive themselves.

The Beautiful Bloom of Humility

Grace is a rarer thing than we realize, and the flower of humility seldom blooms. But they would grow abundantly in our garden if we only realized “I am what I am by the grace of God.”

The Ministry of the Eternal Christ

Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation.

Hebrews 13:7

In Hebrews 13:7 Paul exhorts believers to respect, acknowledge, and follow the faithful pastor and spiritual guides whom the Lord has been pleased to give them and to consider the subject and object of their ministry—*Jesus Christ, who is the same yesterday, today, and forever!* A faithful pastor will preach Christ. The goal of his life and ministry will be to know Christ for himself and then to lead his hearers to know Christ for themselves.

1. Christ is the same in his glory, his offices, his purpose, and his work *yesterday*. In the beginning of the world he was the everlasting I AM, the surety of the covenant, and the Lamb slain. He is the substance and sum of all Old Testament promises, sacrifices, and types.

2. Christ is the same *today*! In his person, he is the God-Man; in his offices, he is Prophet, Priest, and King! He is the *only Redeemer*.

3. Christ is the same *forever*. His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom and his priesthood an unchanging one. His love and care for his people never change.

If you are brought by God's Spirit to love, believe, and rest in the Lord Jesus Christ as your wisdom, righteousness, and sanctification, you will be eternally blessed beyond description, and my goal will be realized. But, if not, God will yet be honored and our ministry of warning and exhortation will be owned by the eternal King whose justice also must be glorified!

In Christ

In Christ, the Father's love
Was freely to men given;
In Christ, the Father's righteous grace
Secured our home in heaven.

In Christ, I've all my soul desires;
He is my supreme delight;
In Christ, all the Father requires
To turn my darkness into light.

In Christ, the source of all my bliss,
My Saviour, brother, friend;
In Christ is all my righteousness;
On him alone I depend.

Contentment

One who is born of the Spirit of God and has a saving interest in Christ is an *heir of God*, is *rich in faith*, and has *all of his needs met in Christ!* He should be content with his lot on earth and be thankful for all things.

One thing is certain: in Christ we have all things that are worth having. “Godliness with contentment is great gain” (1 Tim. 6:6). We brought nothing into this world but our sin, and we shall take nothing out. Earthly possessions, honors, and relationships have no value beyond this world; but, to be forgiven of sin and made a joint-heir with Christ Jesus is of the greatest eternal value!

To learn this in heart is to avoid covetousness (which is idolatry) and to enjoy peace and contentment with much or little. “In everything give thanks for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you” (1 Thess. 5:18).

By Grace are ye Saved

“By grace are ye saved,” declared Paul as he took the crown off the head of man in every respect and gave all glory to God. He exalted the Lord God, our gracious Sovereign, who will have mercy upon whom he will have mercy.

I wish every preacher would proclaim this glorious doctrine “By grace are ye saved.” This is the doctrine that will shake the gates of hell if it is preached. If you are to ever get any comfort or assurance or hope, it will not be in your morality, works, or freewill; but, it will come from realizing that it is by the grace of God in Christ Jesus that we are saved.

What the sun is to the heavens, that is God’s grace in Christ to theology. Take away the mercy of Christ in substitution and there is nothing left worth preaching or believing.

Today

Some men look more to the past than the to the present. Is not our Lord the same yesterday, today, and forever? This is my day and his day. Let me minister today!

I Myself will See God

I am a person, a human being, a marvelous work of the Creator. “How wonderfully I am made.” I have a body constructed by the Master Craftsman. I am a soul with personality, emotions, a will, and eternal existence. I was born an individual. I live, think, act, and die an individual. I shall face God, give an account of myself, and spend eternity in my body and soul.

Whatever relationship I have with others, before God, I am a single person as if I were the only person on earth. And set before me as an individual is the testimony of God. This Word deals with all things pertaining to God, sin, salvation in Christ, and all that I need to know and believe in order to find peace, pardon, and life everlasting.

I am not left to my own thoughts or to the opinions of men. God, even the Living God, has spoken! He has said, “Abraham believed God and it was counted to his for righteousness.”

“Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief.”

What are our Distinguishing Points?

Have you noticed among the sects that their special, distinguishing points are their power and cause for existing? When these points are omitted or compromised, they dwindle out.

For example, *Catholicism* without the human priesthood, the confessional, and the mass would be dead. Likewise, *The Church Of*

Christ without baptism, *Pentecostalism* without emotionalism, gifts, and healing, and the *Adventist* without Saturday would all be sterile!

Let us, who preach the gospel, learn that if Christ is left out of our message, *we have no message!* If free grace is left out of the gospel, the gospel is gone. We readily admit that the grace of God in Christ is our forte! If we do not preach Christ, we have no reason to exist as preachers, churches, or missionaries.

All of Grace

The more we are able to look away from our works, the law, and religious duties, the stronger will be our faith. Every person is married to the law as a covenant; and, while there is any fleshly nature left in us, we will find a strong motion in our hearts which tries to turn us back to the works of the law as a ground of acceptance before God! Oh, how easily and foolishly we fall into the error of the Galatians, imagining that we are more secure or more spiritual because of our good deeds or because of our dedication to religious duties.

Now, I say that the more we are able to suppress this direction of thought, the stronger will be our faith and the greater will be our assurance of a saving interest in Christ. A strong believer will cast out the bond-woman and her son, owning himself only a son of free grace, an heir of God through the Lord Jesus and his perfect, imputed righteousness.

The strong believer overlooks all duties, works, experiences, and even graces as a ground of acceptance with God and finds his confidence *only in Christ!* Like Paul, he counts all as loss and rubbish that he may win Christ and be found in him. He will not allow so much as one thread of personal righteousness in his covering. It shall be all of grace from top to bottom! He knows that grace reigns through imputed righteousness alone (Eph. 2:8-10).

Honor and Glory

What becomes of us, or what honor we attain, does not really matter. The honor and glory is his; and, if we are in him, we shall share his glory.

Rest

Rest is a sweet word to the weary soul; all seek it but only believers find it. Paul wrote, “We which have believed do enter into *rest*” (Heb. 4:3). He did not say we shall enter but we *do* enter into rest.

There is a sweet repose, a calm peace, and a sweet rest in Christ. We can trust him to forgive the past, provide for the present, and guarantee the future. If you can believe God, you will find in Christ all you need.

Call him LORD

I notice that few preachers and writers use the expression *our Lord Jesus* or *the Lord Jesus*. It is “Jesus said this” and “Jesus did that” or “Jesus died and rose again.” Brethren, *he is the Lord—he is the living God!*

We need to acknowledge his deity, his dominion, and his divine anointing! He is “God over all, blessed forever” and we can never praise him too much, speak too reverently of him, or give him a high title which he does not deserve.

You may feel that I am *straining at a gnat* but I sincerely do not think so. As for this preacher and this congregation, he is our *Lord Jesus Christ* and I shall continue to discourage any over-familiarity or lack of reverence for his person and work.

“Ye call me LORD and ye say well, for so I am.” And I urge all who use his glorious name, even in conversation, to use it most reverently and with full honors!

Who God Is

God is not who we *think* he is. God is *who he is!* If God were who we think he is, we would have as many gods as we have people. Our thoughts are not his thought. He said, “You thought I was altogether such an one as yourself” (Ps. 50:21).

Our Only Ground of Hope

I want to be able to say in sincerity and truth, “I know whom I have believed and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day” (2 Tim. 1:12). All other ground is sinking sand; all other hope is folly and will only bring grief and despair

Nothing but the Blood

Nothing but the blood of Christ can save guilty sinners! I care not how orthodox the *doctrine*, how exact the *ordinance*, how true the *form*, or how scriptural the *practice*, it is all vain and empty if you rely upon it for acceptance with God.

God forbid that we should at any time say a word against any of these holy and precious things; but, *keep them in their place!* If you make anything but the person and work of Christ to be the basis of your soul’s salvation, you shall be disappointed and ashamed in that day. There is no saving power anywhere except in *the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ.*

“Could my tears forever flow,
Could my zeal no respite know,
All for sin could not atone,
Christ must save, and *Christ alone!*”⁴⁹

The Lord’s Church

I love the Lord’s church! I choose to be personally and closely identified with the body of believers in my area who love Christ, worship him, and boldly preach his sovereign, redeeming grace.

Churches can be very disappointing things; and, like those churches of the apostle’s days, they all have their faults. Church members are not all they ought to be but they are all our brothers and sisters and I prefer their company above all others.

Someone once wrote of his church:

“Yet, Lord, thy saints on earth may reap
Some profit by the good we do;
These are the company I keep,
These are the choicest friends I know.

Let others choose the sons of mirth
To give a relish to their wine;
I love the men of heav’nly birth,
Whose thoughts and language are divine.”⁵⁰

Everyone Can’t All Be Right

Some think that it does not matter what a man believes so long as he is sincere. The average person thinks that all religions are right. “You go to your church and I’ll go to mine, you believe what you

⁴⁹ Toplady, Augustus. *Rock of Ages*. The Gospel Magazine. London, 1776.

⁵⁰ Watts, Isaac. *Psalms 16*. Psalms and Hymns of Isaac Watts. London, 1724.

think is right and I'll believe what I think is right, and we'll meet in heaven someday and rejoice in our respective saviors."

No! my friends, we cannot all be right when we contradict one another so. It is imperative that we search the Scriptures and see what God says. A doctrine is not true because I believe it or because you believe it, but it is true only if God says it!

I do not ask whether you believe what I preach—perhaps you do not. But I ask you to search the Scriptures and determine whether these things be so. I am not afraid to submit my belief in God's immutable sovereignty, man's total fall and ruin, God's elective grace, Christ's effectual atonement, the Spirit's invincible call, and the perseverance of the sheep to *the Word of God!*

A Believer's Attitude Toward Sin

1. He knows and rejoices that all of his sin and sins are pardoned, paid for, and put away by the sacrifice of Christ The Lord.

2. He condemns sin in himself! While sin does not reign it does remain in the believer, but he does not excuse or justify it. He grieves over it and daily confesses his sins before God. He hates a bad attitude as much as evil actions. He judges his motives as well as his manner by the holiness of Christ; and, when he finds iniquity in himself, he despises it and judges himself. "O wretched man that I am!"

3. He forgives sin in others! He does not forgive himself—only God can do that—but he is quick to pity, have mercy upon, and forgive others. Not to be able to forgive is to forfeit the right to ask forgiveness.

4. He longs to be free from all sin and to be perfectly conformed to the image of Christ. While he rejoices in Christ, is content with his lot, and finds joy in the fellowship of Christ's Church, he will only be satisfied when he awakes in the likeness of Christ!

Blessings to Report

In the Lord's gracious providence, he continues to open doors and give us the privilege of sharing his gospel of grace and mercy in Christ with others. Almost 1000 tapes per month are mailed to this nation and other nations. Response to our television program numbers anywhere between 50 and 100 letters each week. Your gifts to our missionaries last month alone was \$10,000. Invitations for me to preach the gospel to other churches are more than I can possibly fulfill. However, I know that it is your desire that I accept all that I can. "Necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel" (1 Cor. 9:16).

Someone said, "You can't build a church and be gone most of the time." Perhaps, but I believe that this is the Lord's Church, and he will build it, sustain it, and keep his people faithful, especially when they and their pastor are seeking to obey his order to "go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature."

It is not your desire nor my intention to refuse a call to minister the gospel in other places simply because a pastor should not be away too much. Besides, I feel that it is a rich blessing to you to be able to hear other preachers of the gospel!

Some of us have been together over 33 years! That is quite long enough to build a relationship of love, understanding, trust, and dedication to our blessed Lord and his kingdom of grace. If, after all these years, there is no permanent commitment to his and to one another, our profession is a *farce*!

Let us be about our Father's business "while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work!"

Rejoice Evermore

Some people have a religion that seems to impress upon them that it is their sacred duty to be gloomy, sad, disagreeable, and critical of everything. "Draw the blinds on Sunday;" "fold the hands and look

heavenward;” “act spiritual;” be sure that everyone is impressed with your “prayer time,” or the fact that you are “not like other men.” They seem to never rest or rejoice. They go through life with the idea that it is an awful thing to live here, or to be a human being, and it is wicked to be glad and happy.

This is definitely not for me, nor is it in keeping with the Scripture which say, “Rejoice evermore.”

In Everything Give Thanks

Someone said, “Justice is getting what we deserve, mercy is *not* getting what we do deserve, and grace is receiving what we do not deserve.” Oh, how abundant and abounding is the mercy and grace of God to us! How is it that we do not live in a constant attitude of praise and thanksgiving?

I feel as deeply convicted before God of the sin of ingratitude and murmuring and for being discontented as I do of any other sin. To find fault with the good providence of God is *covetousness* (which is idolatry).

There’s no need for me to list our spiritual, material, and physical blessings. Anyone with an understanding of God’s holiness and man’s sin can rejoice that he is not now in eternal darkness. Anyone with eyes to see the dreadful effects of Adam’s fall can rejoice that all of these afflictions are not visited upon him. Anyone who is aware of the poverty and want which much of the world’s population experiences ought to give thanks for every thread of clothing, bite of food, and comfort of home and family.

“Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief.” Lord, I give thanks; help my ingratitude.

Meekness

If you think that meekness is weakness, try being meek for a week.

Yes, You May Believe Christ

If God commands a man to come to Christ and believe on him, then that man is at full liberty to do so! Christ said to the man with a *withered hand*, “Stretch forth your hand,” and he did!

Our gospel carries with it the same command to the lame and the dead. “Oh, ye dry bones, hear the Word of the Lord.”

Be Still

Some preachers want to arouse man’s activity. We want to kill it once and for all, to show him that he is lost and ruined, and that his activities are not able to save him. Some seek to make the man stand up. We seek to bring him down and make him feel that he is in the hands of God and that his business is to submit to God, bow to the claims of Christ, and cry, “Lord, save me or I perish.”

We hold that a man is never so near grace as when he feels that he can do nothing at all but cry for mercy. But, when he says, “I can pray, I can believe, I can do this or that,” the marks of self-sufficiency are still on his brow.

The Fact of Salvation, Not the Time, is Important

I am sure that some who lived in the days of our Lord's visitation to earth, and many who heard the gospel from the apostles and the faithful preachers who followed them, could tell you the exact day they met the risen Redeemer and bowed to his sovereign rule. I have never felt that it was important for a person to be able to tell *when* he was saved, but rather that he be able *now* to state he has experienced repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, that *now* he is looking to Christ as Prophet, Priest, and King and is *now* resting in his righteousness and effectual sin-offering.

Too often men and women like to establish a time of conversion and an *experience*, in order to have something to look back upon for comfort and assurance. This is dangerous! We are not to look to anything nor to anyone but Christ for our hope, our assurance, and our comfort. Paul said something about "forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forth unto those things which are before," and, "looking unto the Lord Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith."

Most of us came through the confusion, errors, and false professions of modern fundamentalism and had so much to unlearn, so many false foundations which had to be destroyed, that it is difficult to set an exact hour when our eyes were turned totally from our idols of religion to our living Lord—when our hearts were weaned from the pride of our religious works and professions and brought to *rest in him alone!*

This is the unaided work of the Spirit of God and the Word of God; and this is a living union which shall never be dissolved. This is accomplished when sinners hear the gospel of God's grace and glory.

You Must Know the Disease to Find the Cure

We won't make much headway in finding a solution if we do not understand the problem. A cure is not likely to be found if we have no knowledge of the disease. In the matter of salvation, the problem is man's sin; the solution is God's grace. The disease is moral depravity and spiritual inability; the remedy is God's mercy in Christ. If a man is nearsighted, he only needs corrective glasses; but, if he is blind, he needs the miracle of sight! If a man is sick, he only needs medicinal aid; but, if he is *dead*, he needs the miracle of life! If man has only strayed from the way, he only needs directions; but, if he is *completely lost*, he needs to be found!

Here is the question to be settled by preachers and people; "What happened in the garden?" When one feels obliged to come to some conclusions on the subjects of election, irresistible grace, and particular redemption, it would be wise for him to first determine the *condition* of the sinner who is to be saved. If man was only wounded by the fall, he needs assistance; if he is dead in sins, he needs to be resurrected and that by the purpose and power of the God of life.

If fallen man still has his moral ability and power of choice, then let us wait for him to choose and seek God; but, if he loves darkness and will not come to Christ, then Christ must love and come to him.

If You Would Know God

God is *who he is* and *who he says he is*; therefore, a knowledge of God must come from him by divine revelation. Any true knowledge of the Lord God must be revealed to us by the Spirit of God, or we will perish in ignorance, worshipping the idols of our imagination, calling them God.

God is pleased to reveal himself in two ways: through his *Word* and through his *Son*. "God spoke to the fathers by the prophets and hath spoken to us by his Son" (Heb. 1:1-2). If you would know the

true and living God, trust not your dreams, your visions, your thoughts, or your traditions; but, look to his *Word* and to his *Son*.

“I and my Father are one; he that hath seen me hath seen the Father.” Any thoughts or ideas of God which are contrary to the Word of God and the person of Jesus Christ are false and full of idolatry!

Take Care of Your Walk Before Others

At all times and before all people the believer’s conversation, conduct, and attitude ought to be glorifying to God and in keeping with the principles of holiness and grace! But we should be *especially* careful and cautious in the presence of young Christians and unbelievers lest we give offense and mislead them. “Walk in *wisdom* toward them that are without (non-Christians), redeeming the time [making the most of every opportunity to point them to the Redeemer]. Let your conversation be *always* with grace, seasoned with salt” (Col. 4:5-6).

Be careful not to flaunt your liberty in the presence of one who will not understand and may be offended without saying as much. I’m sure you wish to let them know that you are human, a regular fellow, and that you are desirous to identify with them as much as possible. But “let not your good be evil spoken of” by one who is still bound by traditions, customs, and human righteousness. Curb your light-heartedness, dispense with too much idle talk, and never give the impression that you are not much burdened for their spiritual welfare.

You may reply, “But I must be myself; I must speak what I feel and enjoy my freedom in Christ.” You have opportunity enough to be yourself around mature members of the body of Christ (in a way that will edify and encourage them in the walk of faith), but walk in wisdom, restraint, and in a demonstration of piety and seriousness toward men who either do not know Christ or who are just now showing an interest in the gospel.

You brought your children up delicately and carefully; be as sensitive with God’s babes and little children.

Be a Faithful Steward

While I am away preaching the gospel in other places, I depend upon you to be faithful to the services, to encourage and visit one another, to support the many ministries of the church, to pray one for another, and to pray for me and for those who preach the Word here.

God has given us a strong influence and open door to minister to many all over the world. It is required of a steward that he be *faithful!*

Treasure in Earthen Vessels

But we have this treasure in earthen vessels that the excellency of the power may be of God and not of us.

II Corinthians 4:7

The gospel of Christ is called a *treasure* in that it contains *rich truth*; it has *rich blessings*, such as redemption, complete forgiveness, sanctification, and justification; it consists of *rich promises* (precious promises) of his care, compassion, and future glory; it shows forth the *riches of God's grace in Christ*.

This treasure is in *earthen vessels*, meaning the ministers to whom God entrusts this gospel and by whom you hear it. They are weak and frail creatures, subject to like passions and infirmities as other men (James 5:17). God makes the most unlikely to be his instrument of grace that he might have all the glory (I Cor. 1:26-29).

The package must not rival the gift inside. The box containing the perfect diamond must not draw attention away from the gem. Let us receive the treasure—Christ Jesus—in whatever vessel God sends him to us, grateful for its presence and for its service to us, but laying it aside that our full attention, appreciation, and glorifying might be in him!

Actually, the weaker the vessel, the stronger his power appears to be; and, the frailer the vessel, the easier it is to admire and cherish the treasure. Wise is the preacher who quickly learns his role as a cardboard box, not only expendable but expected to be used up and sacrificed for the greater glory of Christ. Wise is the receiver of the gift who knows and appreciates the duties of the box.

Sovereign Grace and the Great Commission

Those who are elected to life in Christ shall be saved (“All that the Father giveth to me shall come to me”), but they shall be brought to Christ in genuine repentance and faith by God’s Spirit through the means he has appointed—*the preaching of the gospel!*

A belief in sovereign grace that discourages prayer for sinners, witnessing, and a sincere command for all men to bow to Christ *now* and to receive him as Lord and Saviour is not of the Lord and is heresy.

I urge, persuade, and beseech you to be reconciled to God, for “He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.”

Mercy is the Sinner’s Sole Request

The sinner who truly comes to Christ does not come to have his earthly problems solved nor to have his body and bank account healed. He comes to be saved from sin; he comes to Christ for *mercy*. Mercy is the sinner’s sole request.

Wealth and honor I disdain,
Earthly comforts, Lord, are vain;
These will never satisfy:

Give me Christ or else I die.⁵¹

If you, as a guilty sinner, have not come to Christ for mercy and redemption from your sins, you have not come to Christ aright. When he has saved us and made us his own, whatever he is pleased to bring to pass in our earthly lives will be for our good and his glory.

Be it success or failure, sorrow or joy, life or death—his *grace is sufficient!*

Take Your Burdens to Lord and Leave them There

I am trying to learn what I have attempted to teach—that we are to take our burdens, cares, anxieties, and needs to the Lord and *leave them there*. Instead of worrying and fretting myself about all the things that concern this church, television, missionaries, conferences, personalities, and a dozen other things, I need to pray about them, do what God enables me to do, and leave it all at his feet.

If those works are not his work, then let them all go to pieces! If they are his work, then he will attend to them and bless them. It is wonderful how smoothly things go when we trust the Lord. Our worrying and fretting cause the problems. When we come here to worship, pray, preach, and fellowship, everyone is lifted, our burdens are laid down, and we find sweet rest in Christ. But, when we leave the services, we seem to say, “I have left my burden inside; I’d better go and take it up again.”

This is *not* the way to *trust God!* The way to trust him is to take our burdens to him and *leave them there!*

⁵¹ Hammond, William. *Gracious Lord, Incline Thine Ear*. Psalms, Hymns, and Spiritual Songs. London: W. Strahan, 1745.

The Logic of Substitution

There is no human logic in the doctrine of heaven. The only real logic is found in the punishment of sin by a holy God and the eternal separation of sinners from his holy presence. That God is able in his mercy, grace, and wisdom to make a way for our sins to be laid on a substitute and the guilty sinner to go free is the greatest glory of his nature that he has seen fit to reveal.

“O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God: how unsearchable are his judgements and his ways past finding out” (Rom. 11:33).

Look to Christ, Not the Blessings

The first experience of faith must be towards God in Christ Jesus and not toward the blessings themselves. The Scripture says, “Let Israel *hope in the Lord*, for with the Lord there is mercy, and with him is plenteous redemption” (Ps. 130:7).

The sinner is not to set his thoughts on the blessings and the promises that he wants; but, he is to look to, go to, and embrace the Lord Jesus Christ; for he himself is the source of mercy and the fountain of redemption. If we have him, we have all that he is.

Be Consistent

I need constantly to remind myself that “all things are of God.” Let me not preach sovereignty and then complain of my lot in life. Let me not talk of divine purpose and then spend my days murmuring about my trials and troubles.

It is totally inconsistent with faith in the sovereign Christ for me to question his good providence. Paul called covetousness *idolatry* and said, “I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content” (Phil. 4:11).

I pray for submission, for with it comes peace and rest.

Perfect Peace

Are you happy? Yes! But I am not without times of sorrow and depression. Like any human, I weep over loved ones, friends, sickness, death, and disappointment. But I sorrow not as those who have no hope. *Christ is my hope!* He loved me, gave himself for me, and will make *all these things* work together for my eternal good.

Are you at rest in your soul? Yes! But I am not free from concern and conviction over my sins and my infirmities. I love Christ but not as I should or as I desire. I am satisfied with him, his mercy, his grace, and his love; but, I will never be totally satisfied until I wake with his likeness.

Do you have peace? Yes! But that peace with God, peace of conscience, and peace in any situation or condition is not based on my merit, feelings, nor religious duties. Christ is my peace! He said, “*In me ye have peace. In the world ye shall have trouble.*”

Any man or woman who claims continual, uninterrupted joy, rest, and peace in this world is either not telling the truth or has no connection with reality! True joy, rest, and peace are things we enjoy in Christ *in the midst* of troubles, afflictions, and infirmities.

Paul’s exhortation was “rejoice in the Lord.” When I am conscious of my weakness, failure, and sins, I rejoice in Christ, my righteousness. When I am concerned about food, clothing, and shelter, I rejoice in Christ, my provider. When I am grieved, Christ is my comfort. When I am faced with death, Christ is my life! So, it is not necessary to put on a false face and deceive others. We are still human; but, our peace, rest, and joy is Christ.

“Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace,
Whose mind is stay on thee.”

Six Signs of Trouble

Every true believer fears the removal of God's presence and power. David prayed, "Take not thy Spirit from me." Paul feared that, "while preaching to others, I might become a castaway." My thoughts are that this condition is manifested in the following ways:

1. We begin to experience no blessing nor benefit from the reading or preaching of the Word. When the Word ceases to convict, rebuke, burn in my heart, and cause me to rejoice in Christ, then God is not speaking to me; for God speaks through his Word.

2. We are in trouble when we feel satisfied with our spiritual progress and become puffed up with knowledge. We become authorities instead of learners; having arrived, our humble spirit is in creed alone, not experience.

3. We can be absent from the fellowship of believers and worship of the Lord without feeling a great loss and an empty heart. A man who can be warmed by his own fire is either dead or dying spiritually.

4. We begin to be critics and find fault with others. The Spirit of God leads a man to feel that he is "less than the least," "chief of sinners." When the Spirit of God is not present, we become judges and fault-finders.

5. When our souls are not vexed by the sin within us and the conversation of men about us, when we can feel comfortable in the presence of those who *never knew our God*, when we can conform to the *ways of natural men* and the trend of materialism, the light of God is dim or extinguished.

6. When our thoughts become self-centered and the general welfare, well-being, and joy of others is of no great concern to us, we are certainly not motivated by the Spirit of God. Selfishness, like self-righteousness, is not of God. The heart filled with God's love and grace dwells on others; to make them happy is to be happy.

Keep a Cow Yourself

Have you heard the story of the Irishman who was converted to Christ and whose priest told him that he had better not read the Bible because he was unlearned? The priest said, “I will get the milk of the Word and bring it to you.” To which the Irishman replied, “I will be much obliged to you, sir, if you will bring me the milk of the Word; but, I intend to keep a cow myself. That way I will be sure to get the milk *pure*.”

That is what I want you to do—keep a cow yourself; carry a Bible with you and see whether the milk you are receiving from the pulpit is *pure*! You can trust your body to physicians and your finances to brokers and not suffer too great a loss if they are wrong, but to trust your eternal soul to a preacher and find out in the end that his was *another gospel* is to lose eternally.

“Search the Scriptures daily, whether these things are so” (Acts 17:11).

Free Indeed

The preaching of the gospel sets men free. “Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free” (Jn. 8:32); free from the curse of the law; free from the power of Satan and the practice of sin; free from religious form, ceremony, and ritualism; free from the bondage of false priests and religious lords (for all believers are priests and kings); free from the fear of death and the dread of the tomb.

This is a glorious freedom purchased by our dear Redeemer through his obedient life and vicarious death. This is good and welcome news to the sons of Adam who mourn under the weight and burden of spiritual slavery.

Know Where the Battle is Fought

There is a battlefield today where the character and glory of our Lord is assailed by the forces of evil. You and I may be stirring up dust and holding forth gallantly on many issues; but, we are not in *the real fight*, unless we dare to engage the enemy of our Lord where he is challenging the name of Christ in our day! The discerning servant knows where that is and is willing to pay the price.

Assurance

How can I, with my weak faith and sinful nature, find any assurance of a saving interest in the Lord Jesus?

1. *Look to Christ and not to yourself!* He is our surety from everlasting to everlasting. In the covenant of mercy he assumed full responsibility for our redemption, and he will make it good. His righteousness is perfect and, in him, it is mine. His atonement is sufficient to cleanse me from all sin. His intercession, based upon his person and work, must prevail with our reconciled God. “By his stripes we are healed.”

2. *Look to his Word and not to your thoughts!* Hear what he says: “If the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.” Free from the law of sin and death, free from condemnation at the bar of justice, and, being free from the penalty, power, and practice of sin, you shall be someday free from its very presence. Abraham believed God that he was able to do *all that he had promised*. The Word incarnate and the Word recorded is our assurance. He has said, “I will never leave you,” so I can boldly say, “The Lord is my helper” (Heb 13:5-6). God said it, and that is sufficient.

3. *Listen to the Holy Spirit and not to your doubts!* “His Spirit beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God.” All of our trouble since the garden of Eden has come from listening to the wrong voice. It is time that every believer tuned out the voices of Satan, doubt, fear, and every enemy of the grace of Christ, and began to listen to him who speaks peace to the troubled heart. “My peace I

give unto you, let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.” Cease from your works, from your efforts to establish a righteousness, from your desire to find some good in this flesh, and enter into his rest!

Is Our Message Offensive?

Paul called his message “the offence of the cross.” Again and again he warned that the true gospel of God’s grace and glory would meet with great opposition from the religious world and the natural world. “The preaching of the cross is foolishness.” “The natural man receiveth not the things of God.”

Our Lord said, “Marvel not if the world hate you.” He also said in John 16, “They will cast you out of organized religion, and whosoever killeth you will think that he serves God in doing so.” If what we preach is not offensive to the religionist and to the worldling, then it is not the gospel of Christ. I repeat, it is not the gospel!

1. *God’s absolute sovereignty* in creation, providence, and redemption offends man’s claim to a freewill! “*We will not have this man reign over us.*”

2. The preaching of *total depravity* and *inability* offends man’s dignity and claim to personal righteousness. “We be not born of fornication,” that is, “we be not (they say) born in sin.” “We may not be perfect, but we are not totally corrupt in God’s sight.”

3. The gospel of Christ comes by *revelation* and this offends man’s natural wisdom. The college professor knows as much about the mysteries of grace as the farmhand, which is nothing apart from the Spirit of God.

4. *Effectual redemption* through the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ, our substitute and sin-offering, offends man’s pride. Men would have God do all that he wants to do or can do; but, there must be a work left for the sinner to perform, that we might share somewhat in the glory.

5. The *lordship of Jesus Christ* offends man's desire for recognition here and the hereafter. "Grant, Lord, that we may sit at thy right and left hand. Let us have a system of rewards to distinguish us in some way from the beggar." We have established our social levels here and choose to continue them in heaven.

Galatians 6:1

We are redeemed, children of God, indwelt by his Spirit of holiness and grace; but, we are still human, still flesh. The motions of sin, the desires of the flesh, and the potential to fall are in every believer. Therefore, if a brother falls into sin of spirit, attitude, or flesh, we are to make every attempt to recover, restore, and resettle him to his place of fellowship.

The attitude of strong, mature, restrained believers toward the fallen is *not* to be critical, holier-than-thou, and condemning. It is to be a spirit of humility and meekness; for, we know that the potential to commit any sin is in us, and we only stand by the grace of God.

It is easy to compare ourselves with weaker Christians, less gifted believers, or even fallen brothers, and to think we are *something special*, strong, or even better than others. We are not to *prove ourselves* by other men's sins or actions, but in the light of God's glory and holiness.

If we can find some measure of genuine spiritual growth and some evidence of the fruit of the Spirit, we can rejoice in what God has truly been pleased to do for us and in us, rather than being buoyed up in vain hope simply because we are not as other men. Every man is judged according to his own works, not in a comparative view of others!

We Press On

I have not attained perfect holiness, perfect knowledge, nor perfect happiness. Though my sanctification is perfect in Christ, it is not yet perfected in me. I know in part, sin dwells in me, and my faith is imperfect; but, I press on. I long to lay hold on that for which Christ laid hold of for me. I want what the Lord purposed and purchased on Calvary—to *be like him!* (Eph. 1:3-6)

My Goal

My goal and aim is to finish the race and obtain the supreme and heavenly prize—the incorruptible crown of life, righteousness, and glory! (Psa. 17:15) We look to Christ (Heb. 12:1-2). We follow and depend on Christ (1 Jn. 3:1-3).

Bless God and Rejoice in the Lord

Let us learn to *bless God!* Let us learn not only to be content but to *rejoice in the Lord!* The word *rejoice* is used ten times in the epistle to the Philippians. Let us learn the meaning of the word, not just in doctrine, but in experience.

There is always cause to rejoice in the Lord—in his *blood* that cleanseth, his *righteousness* that perfects, his *love* which never fails, his *providence* which works all things for our good, his *intercession* which is continual, and in the fact that our names are in the Book of Life—by his grace!

Think on These Things

Philippians 4:8

Whatsoever things are *true*—agreeable to the truth in Christ Jesus, the gospel, and the Word of God.

Whatsoever things are *honest*—honest in the sight of God and men, honest in business, speech, and conduct.

Whatsoever things are *just*—Christ is the Just One, enabling God to be just and justifier; but our thoughts should also be concerned with justice for the oppressed.

Whatsoever things are *pure*—pure in word and deed, in opposition to carnality, vulgarity, and lust.

Whatsoever things are *holy*—agreeable to the character of God and his kingdom, the things which promote unbroken fellowship with God in Christ.

Whatsoever things are *lovely*—these are faith, joy, love, and all the fruits of the Spirit.

Whatsoever things are of *good report*—things that contribute to faith, a good name, a good reputation, and unity of purpose.

If anything is virtuous and worthy of praise, *think* on it, for “as a man thinketh in his heart, so is he!”

Our Hope

Our hope for eternal mercy is built on pure grace. God saved us because he is gracious, not because we are. God chose us because he loved us, not because we loved him.

A Sure Hope

Concerning the character of God, what gross mistakes men make! I believe the root and foundation of all error in theology comes from ignorance of the character and attributes of God himself. Arminian theology makes God to be less than he is. Men receive false doctrine because they do not have a clear understanding of the omnipotence, holiness, immutability, or sovereignty of God. If God is given his rightful place we will, like Isaiah, see his holiness and our sinfulness. We will cry, “Woe is me; I am cut off.”

The necessity of a suitable mediator, a sufficient sacrifice, and a God-honoring righteousness will become evident (1 Corinthians 1:30). “Of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption” will take on a new and essential meaning.

The greatness, importance, and power of your religion depends entirely on the greatness, glory, and power of *your god*. The depth of a man’s worship depends on the majesty and greatness of the God he worships. The strength of a man’s faith depends on the power and ability of the God he believes. Abraham believed God—that *he was able* to perform all that he promised. The peace and rest a man enjoys depend on his confidence in the God who controls the flight of an angel or a fly, the flash of lightning, or the glimmer of a glow-worm. The assurance of redemption and hope of eternal life that a man enjoys depends not upon his works, faithfulness, nor his own righteousness, but on the sufficient, effectual obedience and substitutionary death of the one Redeemer—Jesus Christ—who cannot fail in all that he undertook as surety and representative of his elect, given him by the Father.

Give me a sovereign, omnipotent Lord of heaven and earth, with authority over all the universe of men and angels, and I will preach to you a *sure hope* of mercy and grace!

Is This You?

The Lord Jesus Christ is the saviour. He alone is the object of our faith; for he, by his obedience and sacrifice, enables the Father to be both just and justifier.

The Holy Spirit is the one who calls us to Christ. He quickens, convicts, and enables us to lay hold of Christ by faith.

The gospel is the invitation. Yea, more than an invitation; it is a summons, a command for all who are weary to come to rest, all who are guilty to come for grace, and all who are helpless to come for strength. If you have heard the gospel of God's grace, you have received a personal invitation from the Lord of glory to bow to the claims of Christ and receive his mercy.

Baptism is your public confession of union with Christ in his death, burial, resurrection, and glorious acceptance. If these other things are truly you, "Why tarriest thou? Arise, and be baptized."

Our Public Profession

We do not apply pressure to people to make religious professions, nor do we seek to build a large membership in this church. Our purpose is to glorify God in the preaching of his Word and to present clearly to men and women the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

However, we do welcome to the membership those whom the Lord has saved and who have been scripturally baptized by immersion. If you wish to be identified with this congregation, we welcome you. If you desire to follow the Lord in baptism, notify the pastor.

Boasting is Excluded

The fact that conversion and salvation are of God is a humbling truth. Grace puts its hand on the boasting mouth and shuts it once and for all. It then takes its hand off the mouth and that mouth praises Christ for his sovereign grace and trembles at the thought of taking any honor and glory from God.

We Preach Christ Crucified

We should be able to do that quickly enough and then get on with the “practical things” men really need to live holy lives and find happiness in the Christian walk, right? It shouldn’t take a *lifetime* to preach Christ and him crucified, should it? No! But if a man ever *begins to see* all that is taught, purchased, revealed, exemplified, and included in Christ crucified, ten thousand lifetimes would not be sufficient to exhaust the subject.

The apostle said, “And now abideth *faith, hope, and love, these three...*” But where are these three learned? Where are these three exemplified? At the cross! “Greater love hath no man than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.”

“A proud look” is listed first among seven things God hates. Where is pride to be reckoned with? Where is humility taught? At the cross! “Let this mind be in you which was in Christ, who humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.”

“Obedient unto death.” This is our example if we would learn *obedience* to God’s will and commandments. “Though he were a son, yet he learned obedience by the things which he suffered.” This is where you will learn it too—at the cross!

When the apostle Paul would teach the grace of *giving* in 2 Corinthians 8, he summed it up in these words, “For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor.” We learn to give at the cross!

I challenge you to find any grace, fruit, or purpose of God relating to the believer which does not take one directly to the cross for its *fulfillment*, its *example*, or its *motivation*!

Forbear and Forgive

As long as we are in the flesh, we will have misunderstandings, un-pleasantries, and even injustices (we will feel that our rights have been violated and others have been wrong in what they have said and done). What is to be our attitude?

It is to be two-fold; *forbearing* and *forgiving*. To forbear is to control our emotions, surrendering our rights for the time being in patient hope that God will reveal his purpose and will. To forgive is to actually put the misunderstanding out of mind and restore a state of love and fellowship. This is the way our Lord treats us. He is longsuffering and patient with us, forgiving our sins, remembering them no more! “Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye” (Col. 3:13).

“Above all things,” the most necessary grace is *love* (Matt. 22:36-40; 1 Cor. 13:1-3,13). This is the bond which binds everything together in complete harmony for the glory of God and the good of one another. Knowledge, activity, zeal, and morality won’t bind us to Christ or to one another, but *love* will!

Proper Duties

It is the business of the people to fill the pews and the business of the preacher is to fill the pulpit. Any time either gets his duty confused, trouble is the result. It is indeed sad when hearers decide what they should or will hear; but, it is even sadder when the preacher dares to compromise the glorious truth of God’s grace and glory in Christ in order to gain fame, a name, or a hearing!

One man said of Whitefield, “I respect him not because *I believe* what he preaches, but I know that *he* does!”

Here I Stand

Here I stand—I can do no other! Let others waver, compromise, or cover; but I preach what Spurgeon, Luther, Calvin, Augustine, Paul, the apostles, and the prophets preached—“Salvation is of the Lord.”

Christ died in the stead of his people; and, as God is just, he will not—cannot—punish one soul of Adam’s race for whom Christ died. There is not one sin the book of God against any believer. Our sins were laid on him, the law is honored, the justice of God satisfied; and, inasmuch as sin condemned him, sin cannot condemn us!

This is my hope, comfort, and my security—that all my sins, transgressions, and iniquities were atoned for before they were even committed! This, indeed, is good news for the guilty!

The Weightiest Woe of Hell

The greatest joy and glory of heaven is to be with Christ and to behold his glory; but we are also to be like Christ and to be glorified with him! In all that Christ has, the believer also has a share. To be honored with him, accepted in him, and glorified with him is heaven indeed.

Chrysostom said, “The pains of hell are not the greatest part of hell; the loss of heaven is the weightiest woe of hell.”⁵² To lose the presence, the company, the glory, and the hope of Christ is the greatest part of damnation.

⁵² Spurgeon. Charles H. *The Redeemer’s Prayer*. New Park Street Pulpit Sermons. Vol. 3. London: Passmore and Alabaster. 1858

True Prayer

I read something once about prayer that helped me. “God weighs your prayer, not by quantity but by quality, not by the outward dress and eloquent words but by the inner soul and the intense sincerity and earnestness that is in them.”

Have you sometimes lifted up your eyes from a time of prayer, whether public or private, and thought, “I do not think I did much good with that prayer,” or “What a pitiful effort I made?” Most likely, those prayers which we think the least of are the most acceptable to God.

When we feel satisfied or glory in our prayer, in all probability God will have nothing to do with it. If you see any beauty in your prayer, God will not; for you evidently were looking at your grace and not His!⁵³

The Word of God

Let us profit by the books and writings of men as we can; but there is one old book, a book of power, wealth, and infallible truth, that we must not neglect—that book is the Bible! One man, when he came to die, declared, “I wish I had spent as much time reading the Bible as I spent reading worthless literature!”⁵⁴

⁵³ Spurgeon, Charles H. *Comfort for Those Whose Prayers are Feeble*. A brief sermon from The Sword and Trowel. London: Passmore and Alabaster. 1872. This article is a paraphrase of the fuller quote, which reads, “You know not what scales God weighs your prayers in—not by quantity but by quality, not by the outward dress of verbiage, but by the inner soul and the intense earnestness that was in it does he compute its value. Do you not sometimes rise from your knees in your little room and say, “I do not think I have prayed, I could not feel at home in prayer?” Nine times out of every ten those prayers are most prevalent with God which we think are the least acceptable, but when we glory in our prayer God will have nothing to do with it. If you see any beauty in your own supplication God will not; for you have evidently been looking at your prayer and not at him.”

⁵⁴ Spurgeon, Charles H. *Search the Scriptures*. New Park Street Pulpit Sermons, Vol. 3. London: Passmore and Alabaster, 1857. Reprinted by Pilgrim Publications under New Park Street Pulpit Sermons Vol. 3 & 4. The original quotation reads, ““Ah!” said one, when he came to die, who had been a great classic, “I would to God I had spent as much time in reading my Bible as I have spent in reading Livy! Would to God I had been exact in my criticisms of Holy Scripture as I was upon criticisms upon Horace!”

Spurgeon once said, “Depend on it; it is God’s Word, not man’s comments upon God’s Word, that saves sinners. I have marked in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, the conversion of a sinner is traceable to some Scripture preached or quoted, rather than to any trite or original saying by the preacher. It is God’s Word that breaks the fetters and sets the prisoner free; it is God’s Word instrumentally that saves the soul; therefore, let us bring all men to the touchstone”⁵⁵—to the Word of God. “If they speak not according to his Word, it is because there is no light in them!”

Should all the forms that men devise
Assault your faith with treacherous art,
You call them vanity and lies,
And bind the gospel to your heart.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ Ibid. The first line, “Depend upon it...that saves sinners,” is attributed to Robert Murray M’Cheyne.

⁵⁶ Watts, Isaac. *Let Everlasting Glories Crown*. Hymns and Spiritual Songs. London: 1707-1709.

Bulletin Articles of Henry Mahan For the Year 1985

How Can We be Ashamed of Him?

How can we be ashamed of him who has saved us with an eternal salvation? Of him who has called us by his Holy Spirit into his righteousness and to a participation of all his grace? Of him who redeemed us and made us his own, not according to our works (at any time, either before or after our calling) but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given to us in Christ before the foundation of the world?

The Lord God chose us in Christ, gave his beloved Son to redeem us, would not leave us in sin but called us to himself and accepted us in the Beloved. To be ashamed of him, his Word, his kingdom, his blood, his people, or his grace would be unthinkable!

**“For unto us a child is born, unto us a
Son is given.”**

Isaiah 9:6

It is a fact there was a child born of woman, made under the law to redeem sinners. It is a fact that a Son is given. As the Son of God, he is not born but given! He is begotten—not made. But the question is, “Is this child born to us? Is this Son given to us?”

1. He is born to us *if we are born to him*. Let no man say that Christ is his redeemer if he has not been born again of God's Spirit. Only regenerated persons can claim a union with this child.

2. He is given to us *if we are given to him*. "All that my Father giveth me shall come to me" (Jn. 6:37). "Behold I and the children which God hath given me" (Heb. 2:13). God has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in Christ. He chose us in Christ. He chose us in Christ because he would populate heaven with a people like Christ, and all of this according to the good pleasure of his will (Eph. 1:3-5).

3. This Son is given to us *if we are sons*. The Son of God is not mine to enjoy, to love, and to delight in if I am not a son of God, too. If you can call God "Father" you can lay claim to a joint-heirship with Christ (Jn. 1:12).

This is no Sham Salvation

The notion of the world is that salvation in Christ is an emotional dream—a lot of sentiment and feeling. But there is nothing dreamy about it. It is not fiction but fact upon fact. The Lord Jesus does not gloss over nor conceal the condition of those whom he came to save. He finds us guilty, condemned in the worst sense; and, as our substitute, he endures the penalty for our sins and dies in our stead. He takes us as we are and deals with us as we are.

The Lord Jesus meets the law of God as it is; holy, unchangeable, and exact. He does not alter the law nor brand it as being too stern, too exacting, nor too holy. He is made under the law as it is and, in the flesh, he honored and obeyed the law in every jot and tittle.

Christ deals with us as we are, he deals with us as the law is, and he deals with us as God is; on the principles of pure righteousness and justice. If there is anything questionable or uncertain in the work that Christ has done to redeem us (either in honoring the law or satisfying God's justice), it may fail us at last. But our foundation is *sure*.

Christ is our wisdom, our righteousness, our sanctification, and our redemption. He has taken away all shame, sentiment, and idle claims. We are absolutely complete in him. A God who could save without righteousness may condemn without reason. A God who could waive his justice may waive his mercy.

Tell Me About Your Lord

I question today's easy believism which obligates God but does not glorify God; which designates Jesus Christ as Saviour but denies him his Lordship. Rolfe Barnard used to say, "Don't talk to me so much about your Saviour, but tell me who your Lord is. *Somebody is your lord!* Whoever your Lord is, his servant you are!"

What do we say to our generation? "Accept Jesus as your Saviour?" It's hard to find anyone who *has not* already done that! Or do we say, "Cease from self and bow to the claims of the Lord Jesus Christ?" It is hard to find anyone who *has* done that! Christ will be *Lord of all!*

Electing Love

We preach election because there is not a single blessing that comes to us from the hand of our Redeemer that is not stamped with the hand of God's electing love. The Scriptures say, "God hath chosen you to salvation." Again, "He hath chosen us that we should be holy." Again, "The God of our fathers hath chosen thee that thou shouldest know his will."

It is not in ourselves that these blessings are constrained. We have them because of *our union with Christ*, and we are united with Christ because of the Father's divine and sovereign choice. Let us never imagine that the atoning sacrifice of Christ was intended to make an angry God willing to be merciful. That is not the truth. Jesus Christ died, not to create mercy and love in the heart of God, but to open a

just and righteous way for that mercy and love which is there from all eternity.

God's mercy and love went forth to us before the Saviour came—*that's why he came!* Spiritual blessings are heavenly blessings. They come from heaven and are of a heavenly nature. We enjoy these in Christ because he has purchased them for us and has gone there to possess them for us in his own name.

All things are yours, and you are Christ's, and Christ is God's. It all starts with God's sovereign choice.

Give Thanks

This, my friend, should be our desire and goal—to be able, in sincerity and truth, to rejoice in the Lord always, and in *everything* to give thanks!

Preaching

Preaching is more than a religious ceremony or some facts to be debated, accepted, or rejected. True preaching is God speaking through a man, and carries with it a call—a command from the living God to be received and obeyed.

He Preached Grace

No greater acclamation could any preacher have than this: “He preached grace—abundantly.”

The Believer's Hope

Somewhere between proud presumption and dead despair is the believer's hope. Somewhere between fleshly familiarity with deity and slavish fear there is the believer's hope. Somewhere between modern, easy-believism and medieval fatalism there is the believer's hope.

Someone once said, "God has hedged us about on one side with his promises of mercy lest we despair, and he has hedged us about on the other side with warnings of apostasy lest we presume."

I have read in the Scriptures of those who laid down their lives for him, but I have also read of those who "walked no more with him." In thirty-one years of preaching I have seen some who continued in the faith until God called them home; but, I have seen others who have lost interest in the gospel and ended up with a life of nothing but tradition, doctrine, and an old experience.

Jeremiah sounds a clear note on the believer's hope in Lamentations 3:22-24. "It is the Lord's mercy that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning; great is thy faithfulness. The Lord is my portion, saith the soul, therefore will I *hope in him*."

The Lord is my inheritance, my joy and my delight—not just his pardon but his *presence*; not just his blessings but his *being*; not just his heavenly place but his *holy person*.

A.B. Simpson caught the truth in his poem:

"Once it was the blessing; now it is the Lord;
Once it was the feeling; now it is His Word.
Once His gifts I wanted; now the Giver own;
Once I sought for healing; now *himself* alone."

The Believer's Paradox

A believer in Christ has conflict in his soul. The old Adam does not die without a terrible struggle. "The things I would do, I do not; and the things I would not do, I do," said Paul.

What a paradox the believer is: joyful, but in continual heaviness; full, but oh so empty; rich, but less than the least of all.

The Wrath of Man

Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee; the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain.

Psalm 76:10

Let the heathen rage; let the atheist boast; let the profane swear. All that they do and say shall redound to the glory of God, and they can do no more than God allows them to do. Wicked men crucified the Lord in their wrath, but they did what God determined before to be done. Persecutors mock and ridicule the Lord's people, causing them great anguish and discomfort; but these trials are used of God to strengthen our faith, wean us from this world, and make us more like Christ.

The wrath, opposition, and persecution of wicked rebels, which God is not pleased to use for his glory or our good, *he will restrain!*

The Nature of Faith

For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

Romans 10:10

The Apostle Paul explains the nature of faith in Romans 10:10. Faith does not lie in a bare mental assent to facts nor in a doctrinal position, but in a genuine *heart* work. It is believing Christ with the affections, the will, and the understanding. We receive not only the truth of Christ, but Christ himself.

Rest

I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep; for thou Lord only makest me dwell in safety.

Psalm 4:8

Better than bars and locks is the protection of our Lord. Armed men kept the bed of Solomon; but we do not believe he slept more soundly than his father, David, whose bed was the hard ground, and who was hunted by evil men.

Note the word “only” which means that God alone was his keeper; and that though alone, without man’s help, he was in good keeping; for he was “alone with God.”

O Lord, give us calm repose on thee that, like David, we may lie down in peace and sleep each night while we live, and then joyfully lie down at that appointed time to sleep in death and rest in Christ.

The Seven Names of the Lord

Jehovah-jireh: The Lord will provide.

Jehovah-rapha: The Lord that healeth.

Jehovah-nissi: The Lord our banner.

Jehovah-shalom: The Lord our peace.
Jehovah-ra-ah: The Lord my shepherd.
Jehovah-tsidkenu: The Lord our righteousness.
Jehovah-shammah: The Lord is present.

Glory in the Cross of Christ

Every religious person is going to glory *in* something. He will glory in his pedigree, his morality, his gifts, his office, his revelations, or his sufferings. With a strong “God forbid,” Paul made a clean sweep of all these grounds for boasting and declared, “I will glory *only in* the cross of Christ.”

You know without my telling you that he referred not to a tree, or a necklace, or a symbol on a church steeple, but to the great atonement of our Lord—to the substitutionary, vicarious suffering of Christ—to the glorious gospel which came from the cross.

I wish today’s religion would *totally abandon* the superstitious use of crosses and begin again to preach the true cross of Christ—the gospel of his glory!

Read the Scriptures with Your Eyes Open

I can understand how men and women who have never read or heard the Word of God preached can look to and depend on their works and self-righteousness to make them acceptable before God; for this seems logical to the natural mind which knows nothing of God, sin, righteousness, and divine holiness.

But I cannot understand how any person who has read the Scriptures can fail to see that salvation is by grace alone through the merits and death of the Lord Jesus Christ. “To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins” (Acts 10:43).

To Be Called A Christian

We are *crucified* with Christ, *buried* with him in baptism, *walking* with him in the light of the Scriptures, *at his feet* in humility, *assembled* with his people in worship and praise, *bearing* his reproach, *forgiving* as he forgave, *loving* as he loved, and *waiting* for his return.

In other words, confessing Christ before men is to be so closely associated with Christ that one is called in truth by others *a Christian!*

Run the Race Set Before You

The Apostle Paul declared in Philippians 3:13-14, “Brethren, I don’t claim to have arrived at perfection in doctrine, spirit, or deed. I am not yet all that Christ would have me to be. I am not all that I would like to be, nor even all that I ought to be. Thank God, however, I am not what I used to be. One thing I do; I forget what lies behind me—my struggles and attempts at self-righteousness in false religion, my experiences and lessons learned in spiritual infancy, my works and labors since conversion, and even my recent growth. Now I reach forth for present and future blessings and revelations of his grace.”

A runner in a race does not look behind to see how far he has come nor look about to see if he is outrunning others; but he is concerned with crossing the line, finishing the race, and obtaining the prize—the incorruptible crown of life.

The Way of the Believer

It is more profitable and enjoyable to love than to hate, to forgive than to hold a grudge, to smile than to quarrel, to behave kindly than to act ugly. The way of the transgressor is hard, not the way of the believer.

Nothing to Fear

If you truly love, reverence, and fear the Lord God, you have nothing else to fear!

Be Not Unequally Yoked with Unbelievers

Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?

II Corinthians 6:14

This metaphor is taken from horses or oxen which, being joined together by a common yoke, must walk and pull together in the same direction and with the same goal or have serious problems. Believers and unbelievers do not have the same principles, natures, nor goals. They cannot walk together in harmony because they are not agreed on the vital issues of life, sin, salvation, God's glory, and the gospel (Amos 3:3).

Therefore, the believer is unwise who marries an unbeliever, who seeks social fellowship and companionship with unbelievers, or who attempts to worship or conduct religious projects with unbelievers. This is not to be understood as forbidding any contact with unbelievers in civil society, conversation, or vocation and trade. If that were true, the believer would have to leave the world. Also, God put us in the world as salt and light (Mt. 5:13-16) to witness to all men and to be an example of his grace, even to those who despise his name.

But to seek an unnecessary alliance and partnership with one who does not know nor love our Master is foolish; for what fellowship, companionship, and agreement can righteousness have with unrighteousness? What an absurdity to think of joining together for comfortable communion darkness and light, or fire and water!

Our True Selves

Your attitude and personality in the house of the Lord and around believers is no indication at all of the presence of grace and faith in your soul. But rather your attitude and personality in your own house and toward your own family reveal your true self. 1 Timothy 5:8 says, “But if any provide not for his own and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith and is worse than an infidel.”

This does not only apply to food and clothing, but to love, understanding, kindness, and spiritual example. Actually, I had much rather have the approval and testimony of those with whom I live, for they see me and hear me in unguarded and unfeigned moments.

Salvation is of the Lord

If salvation were partly of God and partly of man, it would be like a house built partly on rock and partly on sand. The whole structure would soon fall. If our dependence were upon the Lord Jesus in a measure and on our own works to some degree, it would be a tower that would never reach the sky, doomed to failure from the start.

Oh to know the full meaning of the words, “Salvation is of the Lord.” Being taught by the Spirit, through the Word, in heart and experience is the only way to learn the full meaning of “Salvation is of the Lord.”

A man will lie broken at the foot of a cliff, every bone dislocated by the fall, and yet still hope to save himself. Piles of sin, mountains of transgressions, and a landslide of iniquity may bury a man, but he will cling to the hope that he will finally dig his way out.

You may crush human nature and grind it to powder, but every particle of dust will reek with pride and self-righteousness. Only the Holy Spirit can make a man surrender, throw up his hands in helplessness, and cry, “Salvation is of the Lord!”

Be Content and Be Confident

Someone wrote that Martin Luther's strength and confidence lay in the fact that he believed so strongly that the ministry in which he was engaged was not his own but the Lord's. He often prayed, "Lord, this is your cause, not mine."

What would this persuasion do for you and me? Is not most of our depression and unhappiness caused by the desire to *see* more than we are seeing, *do* more than we are doing, *have* more than we have, and to *be* what we are not?

If this is *the Lord's cause and not mine*, then I ought to be content to serve diligently where he has placed me, with the gifts he has given me, doing all that I find to do, and rejoicing in his love. "Where two or three are met in my name." Enoch walked with God in a day few did. Paul rejoiced in the Lord when all had forsaken him except Luke.

"Wherefore lift up the hand that hangs down, and the feeble knees" (Heb. 12:12). "The Lord God omnipotent reigneth" (Rev. 19:6). "When the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive tree shall fail, and the fields yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls; *yet* I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation" (Hab. 3:17-18).

The Fear of the Lord

One fire puts out another. Nothing so effectively kills the fear of man as a genuine abundance of the *fear of the Lord*! When the fear of men would tempt a servant of God to compromise or take the offense from the cross, the fear of the Lord gives him *even greater boldness*.

Lovest Thou Me?

This is the point on which a man's relationship with God hinges. As simple as the question may sound, it is most searching. If a man has no love for Christ, he has no faith. If a man truly loves Christ, all is right. If not, all is wrong.

A Heart Work

Worship, praise, prayer, and faith are all *heart work*, not simply participating in ceremonies, rituals of religion, and the chanting of fundamental words and facts. "My son, give me thine *heart*." "The sacrifices of God are a *broken heart* and a contrite spirit."

Genuine Love

A genuine love for others is an evidence of redemption. It is not the *cause* but the *sign*, for no one sincerely loves others except he is regenerated by the Spirit of God. The love of natural men is self-love. I verily believe that the two strongest evidences of true salvation are love and perseverance in faith. Oh, for a heart to love and a faith that will not fail.

"I want to live as one who knows
The fellowship of His love;
With depths of tenderness declare
The mercy which reigns above."

True Profession

My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth.

1 John 3:18

The thing that troubles me most about the validity of our profession of Christ is that we talk, preach, and sing of love, mercy, and forgiveness, but then, when the opportunity comes for us to love the unlovely, forgive the offender, and bind up the wounded heart, we join the circle of Pharisees, clutching our stones, ready to wound and maim.

A profession that does not produce is a false profession.

Judge Not By Outward Appearance

Mr. Spurgeon once said, “Never be guilty of judging a man’s spiritual state by his earthly condition!” It may be that the children of God will be called upon to suffer greatly while the wicked prosper in all things.

David deals with this in Psalm 73. So if you and I imagine that because a man is poor, or in bad health, or in great sorrow that he is being punished by God for sin, more often than not we will condemn the true believer and praise the hypocrite.

Precious

Unto you that believe, He is precious.

1 Peter 2:7

Believers receive Christ, rejoice in Christ, and to them he is precious. His obedience is our righteousness. His blood is our atonement. His

prayers are our intercession. His reign is our glory. His coming is our hope! Christ is all and in all!

My People Pray For Me

On a visit to France, Mr. Spurgeon met an American minister who said, "I have long wished to meet you, Mr. Spurgeon, and to ask you one question. Would you be good enough to give me the secret of your great success?" After a moment's pause, Spurgeon replied, "*My people pray for me!*"

Good Works

There is a contention always going on about the doctrine of good works; and, instead of taking one side or the other, we shall try to see whether there really is anything to quarrel over if we keep to the Scriptures.

We insist, with all our might, that salvation is "not of works, lest any man should boast." But, on the other hand, we freely admit and earnestly teach that "without holiness no man shall see the Lord." Where there are no good works, there is no indwelling of the Spirit of God. That faith which does not produce obedience, good works, and genuine love is not saving faith. Good works must and will be in the believer. They are *not the root*, but *the fruit* of God's salvation. They are not the *way* of the believer's salvation; they are his *walk* in the way of salvation.

The desire of men created anew in Christ is to be rid of all sin. We do sin, but we do not love sin. Sin gets power over us sometimes to our sorrow, yet it shall not have dominion over us; for we are not under the law, but under grace.

The old nature goes after the flesh, for it is fleshly; but the new nature truly seeks the things of God, for it is spiritual. If you have

been created anew, you have been created *unto good works*. If this is not so with us, then our religion is a mere pretense.

Real Conversion

Long ago men accused Jesus Christ of revolution and blasphemy and *put him on a cross*. Today's religionists, while claiming to believe in his Word, have *put him in a sanctuary*. There, amid soft music or hearty singing, the chant of the liturgy or shouts of amen, he can be talked about and worshipped without interfering with their lives. Souls can be "saved" without disturbing the other relationships, partnerships, and patterns they have established.

Those who put him on the cross, hoping to be done with his judgments and demands for their complete submission to his Lordship, were no more deceived than those who have tried to relegate him to church buildings or the worship of him to a Sabbath day.

Real conversion cannot mean anything other than the dedication and committal of the total self to the Lord Jesus Christ. Today's presumption is that God exists to serve and provide for us, whereas Scriptures indicate that our chief end in life is to glorify God!

Do not come to worship him in here if you do not walk with him out there!

Scriptures Alone, Grace Alone, Christ Alone

It's amazing how history repeats itself! We seem to go around in a circle. During the days of the Reformation, when superstition, tradition, and the human will reigned in religion, the reformers waged their battle for the glory of God and the true gospel on a foundation with three critical points.

1. *The scriptures alone.* “Let God be true and every man a liar.” We bow to the Word apart from visions, revelations, or opinions of men.

2. *Grace alone.* Salvation only by free, sovereign, and full grace apart from law, works, or any other contribution of any sort.

3. *Christ alone.* “By himself purged our sins.” *His* person and work effectually, totally, and eternally redeemed his elect.

This is where the battle rages *today* in America, where fundamentalism with its emotion, easy believism, freewill, and super programs seem to have captured the people. It’s back to this three-fold foundation for every true preacher.

The Three R’s

I believe that every sermon we preach should contain the three R’s —*ruin* by the fall, *redemption* by the blood of Christ, and *regeneration* by the Holy Spirit. If our hearers learn these in their hearts, they will not go far wrong on other matters, but if they have not learned these, it will matter very little what else they learn.

Two Truths

It is true that Christ alone is our salvation and sanctification. It is equally true that where the Spirit of Christ dwells, the fruit of the Spirit will be manifested.

How Can Man be Just With God?

The great and important question for you and me always has been and is now, “How can man be just with God?” I do not deny an interest in the mysteries of providence and the matters of prophecy,

but the most important matter to me at all times (and it increases as I grow older and approach the day of judgement) is, “How can I stand before God justified and accepted?” Woe to the man who shall be weighed and found wanting! “If I justify myself,” Job declares, “my mouth would condemn me.” If I say that I am without sin and holy enough for God’s fellowship, I would be a liar and make God a liar!

But Paul declares, “It is God that justifieth.” *He* can, by the substitution and satisfaction of his Son, make the unjust, just, and the unclean, clean. He can cover us with a perfect robe of righteousness so that we are as holy and as pure as the Redeemer himself. And the important thing is that God can justify us in a way that is consistent with his holiness, glorifying to his mercy, honoring to his law, and which completely satisfies his justice.

As the first Adam stood before God as the representative and federal head of the whole human race and it was by his sin that guilt and sin were both imputed and imparted to us, so God in grace sent Christ, the second Adam, the Lord Jesus, to stand in our stead that we might in and through and by him have imputed and imparted to us a perfect righteousness. “By one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.”

This is the good news to the guilty and good tidings of great joy to the helpless. The great writer and preacher, Isaac Watts, declared on his deathbed, “I bless God that his promises are so plain and simple that I do not need great wisdom to grasp them. My hope is simply in the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ, my Lord.”

Take Comfort in the Sovereignty of God

There is nothing more comforting to believers than God’s sovereignty over all things. Under the most adverse circumstances and in the most severe trials, we believe that God has ordained our afflictions, that God overrules them, and that God will sanctify them for our good and his glory.

There is nothing for which we ought to contend more earnestly than the truth of God's rule and reign over all things, all creatures, and all their actions. The throne of God, his right to sit on that throne, and his right to do with his own what he will is what we believe and what we preach.

Let us be accused of over-emphasizing the majesty and power of the living God, but never let it be said that we underestimate his glory.

Five Words to Workers

Here are five words of counsel and instructions for those who work for other people and firms:

1. Be submissive and obedient to your employer, whether he is a believer or an unbeliever. You are hired and paid to do a job. Do it with all your heart as unto the Lord.

2. Seek to please your employer and give satisfaction in every way. Pride of workmanship and production is not to be condemned; laziness and indifference, however, are a disgrace to the gospel.

3. Don't talk back or contradict. Do not reply to orders in either a sarcastic, saucy, or grumbling manner. The boss may not always be right, but he is always the boss!

4. Do not steal from your firm either time, money, or things which you consider of small value. Do not convert to your own use, without permission, that which belongs to the company.

5. Prove yourself to be loyal, reliable, and faithful. It is neither loyal nor faithful to criticize and find fault with your employer behind his back. Keep trusts and confidences which are committed to you.

In fulfilling the part of a good servant and loyal employee, you are able to adorn the gospel you believe and make that gospel attractive to others as they see you walk worthy of it.

You Will Not

You will not come to me, that you might have life.

John 5:40

It was not lack of witnesses, of evidence, nor of proof of his deity and person which kept these Jews from believing on and coming to Christ, but *perversity of will!* It was because (like all natural men) they had fallen, corrupt, and depraved wills.

Men are *unwilling* to come to Christ. They are unwilling to own their sins, unwilling to admit their inability, unwilling to seek God's mercy, and unwilling to cast themselves on Christ. But his people *shall be made willing* in the day of his power!

Thank God for his sovereign will and saving power in Christ! All who come to Christ come *willingly*.

The Person of the Lord Jesus Christ

How complex and mysterious is the person of our Lord Jesus Christ. Isaiah calls him a *child* and a *counselor*. In the same breath he calls him a *son*, he calls him the *Everlasting Father*. He who is an *infant* is the *infinite God*. The *man of sorrows* is the *mighty God*. *despised of men*, yet he is *wonderful*. His garments are rolled in blood, but he is the *prince of peace*. How these words remind me that he is not discovered by research and reason, but by revelation! He said to Peter, "Flesh and blood hath not revealed the knowledge of my glory to you, but the Father has revealed it."

There is no seeing Christ nor understanding Christ except in *his own light*. He is the door, but he openeth and no man shutteth. He is the lesson, but he is also the teacher. He is the destination, but he is the way. He is the object of faith, but he is also the author of faith. He is that which is to be seen and the light by which we see. "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God. How unsearchable are his judgements and his ways past finding out" (Rom.

11:33). How empty are the words “the simple plan of salvation” in the light of this complex and mysterious person, Jesus Christ.

O, Spirit of God, sanctify our carnal thoughts and illuminate our dark understanding. Give us that saving knowledge of him who enables God to be just and justifier, who is both the wisdom and the power of God.

Love

We know that we have passed from death unto life because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death.

1 John 3:14

If there is anything better than being loved, it is to love; for this is the mark of discipleship, the evidence of regeneration, and the bond of perfection. It is the nature of God, for *God is love*. It is the old, the new, the great commandment, and all the commandments in one word—love!

It is the first fruit of the Spirit; it is the foundation of all other graces. And of all that abides, it is the “greatest of these.” It casteth out fear, it covers a multitude of sins, and it brought Christ to earth to be our redeemer.

Love sees what no eye sees, hears what no ear hears, and understands that which only love can teach. It can’t be defined, only experienced. It can’t be destroyed as long as God lives. It can’t be developed; it is the gift of God.

It’s presence is evidence of God’s presence, and its absence is evidence of God’s absence; for “he that loveth not knoweth not God.” The apostle said, “Make love your aim” (1 Cor. 14:1).

Earthen Vessels

We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God and not of us.

2 Corinthians 4:7

God employs weak instruments to make manifest his mighty power and grace. In this, as in everything else, the Lord's thoughts and ways are different from ours.

We would try to do his work with the great, the influential, the talented, and the strong—but *God* used a shepherd lad to conquer the mighty Goliath. He rejected Moses (the rich and mighty) and used Moses (the humble and poor) to deliver Israel. He chose a peasant woman, not a princess, to be the mother of the Saviour. The mighty revival in Samaria was started by a converted harlot. The apostles were fishermen, not scholars.

Why? A simple answer! That the glory, the praise, and the excellency of the power may be of God and not of us. Also that *the faith* of our hearers may be *in God*, not in us!

Repentance toward God—Faith in Christ

Repentance is the hand releasing my idols; faith is an empty hand that reaches out to Christ for his gift of grace.

Repentance is godly sorrow over sin; faith receives a full pardon from Christ.

Repentance cries, "God be merciful to me a sinner;" faith embraces the sinner's Saviour.

Repentance is a genuine hatred for the pollution of sin; faith is seeking cleansing in Christ.

Repentance is the leper covering his mouth and crying, “Unclean, unclean;” faith is the leper coming to Christ and saying, “Lord, if you will you can make me clean.”

Wisdom

The source of all wisdom is God. “If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God...” But let him ask in faith, being assured that this is really what he wants. No real seeker is sent away empty.

Unwilling

And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life.

John 5:40

It was not lack of *evidence* or *witnesses* that kept these Jews from coming to Christ, believing on him, and receiving him as Lord and Saviour. There was evidence enough in him and in his words and acts. “No man spake like this man.” “No man could do these miracles except God be with him.”

There were *witnesses* enough in John the Baptist, the Father himself, the works, and the prophets of old! It was not lack of evidence or witnesses but *their fallen and perverse wills* which kept them from seeing and believing! *and it is so today!*

The Lord Jesus is able and willing to receive and redeem all who come to him, but men by nature are unwilling to come to him that they might have life. Why is this?

1. It is because they are blind to the absolute holiness and justice of God. He will in no wise clear the guilty. Christ is the only way God can be just and Justifier (Rom. 3:19-26).

2. It is because they are blind to their sins and have no sense of their deep and desperate need of a mediator, a sin-offering, and an atonement. “No man cometh to the Father but by me,” for “by him we have now received the atonement” (Rom. 5:11).

3. It is because the carnal mind is enmity against God, and *Jesus Christ is God!* (Jn. 10:30).

My Only Hope

I will tell you this about myself—my sole hope for resurrection in the likeness of Christ and eternal glory lies only in the full atonement Christ made for the ungodly. On this I firmly rest, and I have not the faintest hope in anyone or anything else.

You and I are born of the same father, guilty of the same crimes, and burdened down with the same flesh. Neither of us has anything of his own to plead, nor does the best man who ever lived.

We shall all be saved by the same Saviour or perish in our sins.

Calvinism

I know that we are not “Calvinists” in the sense that we are followers of John Calvin or, for that matter, any man. But I am not ashamed to be identified with faithful men of the past who preached and boldly contended for the gospel of God’s free and sovereign grace. We must not be ashamed of our pedigree. The old truth that Spurgeon preached, that Whitefield preached, that Calvin preached, and that Paul preached is the truth that I must preach today or be false to my conscience and my God.

Mr. Spurgeon once said, “The primary need of the church is not simply more evangelism nor even more holiness (in the first place) but a return to the full truth of the gospel of God’s free grace,” which, for convenience, he was prepared to name “Calvinism.” I cannot

shape the truth in order to get along with preachers and organizations which do not believe it. I cannot take the rough edges off nor the offence from such doctrines as the fall, election, and effectual atonement. Most preachers (if they will but admit it) are afraid for their popularity, jobs, and current situations; therefore, they spend their time *explaining* the Word of God in a way that will not offend those who do not believe the real gospel of God's immutable, sovereign grace!

Someone once said, "You need not protect, defend, or make excuses for a *lion*—turn him loose!" The gospel is the *power* of God—preach it plainly, openly, boldly, and leave the results to the Lord of heaven and earth!

True Faith

Faith without works of obedience is no more than the faith of devils who are damned. "You believe there is one God; you do well" for there is but one God, proved by the light of nature, creation, providence, and Scriptures. But the devils also have this same historical faith and knowledge.

True saving faith produces works of obedience, love, and grace. Faith which has no works is *dead faith*, and works which are not the results of true faith are *dead works*! Good works are second acts necessarily flowing from the life of faith.

Good works are not infallible proof of genuine faith; but the absence of works is certain proof of *the absence of faith*.

Reconciliation

God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself.

2 Corinthians 5:19

This phrase declares the ministry of reconciliation which God has given to faithful preachers. It declares the *author, means, subjects,* and *consequences* of that work. In the person of his dear Son, God was actually providing himself a lamb, a ransom, and an atonement. He did not charge our sins to us, but to Christ, having made Christ to be sin for us.

The word “world” does not mean that Jesus Christ effectually bore the sins of every son of Adam and reconciled every person to God by his death. If this be the case, no one would be finally lost. He reconciled the “world” in the sense that he actually redeemed a people out of every kindred, nation, and tongue, not of the Jews only!

John Owen said, “If Christ died for *all* of the sins of *all* men, then *all* men would be saved; if Christ died for *some* of the sins of *all* men, then *no one* would be saved; but in that he died for *all* of the sins of *some* men, then some will truly be saved.”

This ministry of reconciliation, substitution, and satisfaction has been committed to faithful preachers, and we will preach it. We dare not preach any other message. Inasmuch as Christ is our righteousness, God does not call upon us to produce a righteousness, but to receive his perfect righteousness by faith. Inasmuch as Christ is our surety and substitute, God will not require satisfaction from *us* but accepts us *in the beloved*.

The Love of Christ

A believer lay dangerously ill. He had lived and labored faithfully in the same church for many years. His friends gathered at his home to pray for him. As one of the men prayed, he was heard to say, “Lord, thou knowest how he loved thee.”

The sick man opened his eyes and said, “Please do not pray like that. When Mary and Martha sent for Christ to come to the aid of their brother, they did not say, ‘he who *loves thee* is sick’; but they said, ‘He whom *thou lovest* is sick’.”

It is not our love for Christ that removes fear and disease, but his love for us.

Who Made You to Differ?

Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? Nay; but by the law of faith.

Romans 3:27

Someone may think that the truth of election leads to pride—to teach that we are the chosen people of God will puff a man up with pride! *Quite the contrary!* The truth of God’s sovereign grace in Christ is the very instrument which cuts out pride by the roots. It is written, “Who maketh thee to differ from another? And what hast thou that thou didst not receive? Now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory as if thou hadst not received it?” (1 Cor. 4:7).

If you are a believer, look about you to those of your own family still without any knowledge of Christ, perhaps wrapped in religious tradition and darkness. Now, I ask you, *who made you to differ?* Look about your neighborhood and see drunkenness, profanity, drugs, and broken homes. Now, I ask you, *who made you to differ?* Are you by nature better than they? Or were you in heart and principle more godly than they? Look into the prisons, or institutions, or upon nine-tenths of the world bound in poverty, superstition, and darkness and tell me *who made you to differ?*

How can a sinner saved by grace be proud? Look down to the realms of darkness and see the angels that fell, reserved in everlasting chains. Look at whole nations who, like the angels, have been passed

by in God's wisdom and judgement and tell me *who made you to differ?* A proud believer would be totally inconsistent with free grace!

“’Tis not that I did choose thee;
For Lord, that could not be;
This heart would *still* refuse thee,
But thou hast chosen me.”

The Effects of Trials

Have you ever noticed how believers who have been *severely* tried under the hand of God become more *cautious* and *humble*? They do not speak quite so fast as they used to speak; they do not have a ready solution for every problem; they do not boast of what they *have* done, *will* do, or *would* do under certain circumstances; they are not quite so critical of others who fail; they have little to say about their own doings and much to say about the wonderful grace of our Lord.

Afflictions and trials have a way of *mellowing* believers and creating a certain character which cannot be mistaken or imitated. David wrote in Psalm 119:71, “It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn...”

Good News

Unto you is born a Saviour which is Christ, the Lord.

Luke 2:11

This is the good news, that the Saviour born is none other than Christ the Lord. There is no good news if he is not the Lord God. It is not good news that a great prophet is born. Moses was a great prophet, but he is dead. It is not good news that another priest is born. Aaron was a great high priest, but others have taken his place by reason of his death. It is not good news that a good king is born. David was a good king, but he sleeps even as do the wicked kings.

But if you tell me that the one born in Bethlehem is none other than the eternal God who is *Prophet, Priest, and King*—that is good news! He ever lives to make intercession. He eternally reigns with all authority. He will never leave nor forsake me. If the God-man is my Saviour, *that is good news!*

Enquire in His Temple

A Christian is one who makes enquiries of his God. David said, “One thing have I desired, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to enquire in his temple.”

When believers come to public worship, they come to behold the beauty of the Lord and to enquire in his temple.

A Change – But Not *The* Change

I believe there are many people who think that they have been converted because of certain changes which they have made or which have been made (for various reasons) in their lives. Sometimes there are changes which are beneficial to everyone, but still it is not being born again or being saved.

A man may change from a drunkard to a sober man, and that is good; but it will not make him acceptable in God’s sight. A man may change from being a thief to being honest, and that is good; but it will not save him. A man may learn good and wholesome doctrine, attend the house of worship, and contribute talents and money to helping the ministry; but that will not save him either.

Salvation is not washing the skin; it is the washing of regeneration by the Spirit and by the blood of Christ. Not only is the *walk* different, but the heart is different. Not only are the *words* different, but the spirit and attitude are different.

There is a change wrought in a sinner when he meets the Master in saving faith, but it is *first of all an inward change* which brings an outward change. This order cannot be reversed! There may be outward changes which never reach the heart; but *without fail*, if there is a change in heart, it will bring forth an outward conformity to godliness.

The Grace of Love

When we talk about true, heart love, we are speaking of the *grace of love* which, like faith, is the gift of God. We are born loving ourselves, but not others. We are born with hatred for God. “The natural mind is enmity toward God.”

The grace of love comes only with the new birth. Then this grace of love gives us the spirit or attitude of love which is included in the fruit of the Spirit. “Every one that loveth is born of God and knoweth God” (1 Jn. 4:7).

Then the spirit of love leads to works or labors of love. We love ourselves by nature; therefore, we make ourselves happy, comfortable, and content. When we are given the grace of love, we begin to think of others and seek to make them happy, comfortable, and content.

Terms of Surrender

I cannot know Christ through another man’s mind. I cannot love him with another man’s heart. I cannot believe on him with another man’s faith. I cannot hear him with another’s ears nor see him with another’s eyes!

I pray that he will reveal himself to me, that he will come and dwell with me, and that Christ may be formed in me! It is not enough that I know of his historical life, nor that I give mental agreement to

his doctrines, nor that I approve of his laws. I must gain an interest in Christ and be found in him, not having my own righteousness, but His.

The fact is, I no longer have my own life; it is his. I am not my own master; he is my Master. God's terms of surrender are unconditional!

Love One Another

This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you.

John 15:12

Our Lord commands us to love one another as he loves us. Love is a genuine heart attitude which must be expressed. It cannot co-exist with selfishness, pride, and hard feelings. In the degree that love prevails, *these things are destroyed!*

“Love worketh no ill to his neighbor” (Rom. 13:10). If evil is said or done, it is because love is not present in sufficient force. Genuine love knows no bounds and has no limit—“as I have loved you.”

If occasion requires it, we are to be ready to lay down our lives for one another (Jn. 15:13). *This love* is only by his grace and is shed abroad in the heart by his Spirit. *This love* is evidence that we are his disciples.

Keep the Faith

We have entered a race, and the prize goes to those who finish—to those who keep the faith. There will be difficult times and perhaps heavy trials. We may proceed rapidly or slowly, we may stumble and fall; but, looking to Christ, we continue in the faith. “Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life.”

Humble Yourself

Seekest thou great things for thyself? Seek them not; for, behold, I will bring evil upon all flesh.

Jeremiah 45:5

If our Lord became poor, why should not we, for his glory, be willing to be poor? If he made himself of no reputation, why should we worry about ours? If he was willing to be a servant, why should not we be servants?

What poor creatures we are at our best! If God were to permit us to be doormats to the church, it would be too high an honor for us. What place we serve or what becomes of us does not matter, so long as his purpose is served and his name glorified.

The Greatest of These

And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.

I Corinthians 13:13

If I could speak with the languages of every nation on earth and express myself as angels do, yet have not that true root of love for others which flows from a true love for Christ, I only make an irritating noise with my mouth, which will be of no use to me nor to others.

If I had the gift of prophecy, whereby I could preach the mysteries of Scripture and even foretell the purpose of God in reference to the future; and, though I had a vast knowledge of the most sublime and hidden things and a faith to work miracles, if I have not this *brotherly love*, I am nothing! I may be great in the eyes of men; but, before God, I am nothing.

“If I give away my possessions to feed the poor...” Why would a man do this if he did not love the poor? He might, like Ananias or the Pharisees, do it for self-praise and self-righteous purposes. “If I give my body to be burned,” or die as a martyr for the cause of orthodoxy and religion, “it will profit me nothing.”

No actions, no human sacrifices, and no human sufferings are sufficient to entitle any soul to heaven. It is Christ who saves; and, if I have not that love for Christ which produces a love for others, all of these gifts, offices, and efforts are useless. Love is so essential that, if a man has everything else and has not love, he is nothing.

Love is not the prerogative of a few; it must be the possession of *all*.

When I am Weak

Our strength in the flesh is sure to be our weakness in the spirit. “It is not by might nor power but *by my spirit*,” saith the Lord. I do not mean that brilliant men cannot preach, but that they cannot preach as brilliant men. I am not saying that gifted financiers and able businessmen cannot lead God’s church, but that they cannot lead on the basis of their natural gifts.

God will lay aside Saul’s sword and use David’s sling. If I have any great ability or natural talent, let me learn to pour contempt upon it and minister the Word as a dying man to dying men. “We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God and not of us” (2 Cor. 4:7).

I’m sure that God can do without those who think themselves to be qualified or necessary. “When I am weak *then* I am strong.”

Value All Things in the Light of Eternity

Let us value nothing on this earth any more than we shall value it in eternity. We need to learn to look upon everything this world has to offer in the light of death, judgement, and eternity. Everything that we see, touch, and possess shall pass away. All fleshly relationships will be dissolved; the greatest house shall fall; the finest clothes shall rot and decay; the healthiest body will die. But he that doeth the will of God shall abide forever.

“Swift to its close ebbs out life’s little day;
Earth’s joys grow dim; its glories pass away.
Change and decay in all around I see;
Oh, thou that changest not, abide with me.”

Err on the Side of Simplicity

Most people to whom we preach are totally ignorant of the whole system of grace and salvation. It is better to suppose *too little* knowledge and preach the simplicity of Christ than to suppose *too much* knowledge and allow people to perish without hearing the way of life and trusting a false profession.

The Crown Rights of King Jesus

God hath made Jesus of Nazareth, whom we crucified, to be both Lord and Christ. God hath appointed him *Lord* whether I recognize it or not. He is no misfit here. He deserves to be Lord, for he has both perfect holiness and perfect humility. “Equal with God, yet he hath made himself of no reputation, wherefore God hath highly exalted him and given him a name above every name.”

My friend, the command of God is for us to bow to the crown rights of Jesus Christ. He delights to show mercy. He had rather save you than to damn you, but Christ will have no rival for his glory.

Every kingdom has to have a king; and, in God's kingdom, *it is King Jesus!*

Only one person has the right to rule over you, the church, and the world. He purchased that right at Calvary!

Undivided

Christ, our Lord, is presented in the gospel as *undivided* in his offices. He is Prophet, Priest, and King. The Father will not permit him to be divided. Some would have him as Saviour but not as Sovereign. Some would have his teaching but not his atonement. Some would enjoy the crown but not the cross.

My friend, it will be the complete Christ or no Christ. The gospel holds out no hope to the man who will not hear him, be cleansed by his blood, and bow to him as Lord.

Behold the Lamb of God

The Jews were looking for Messiah to come as a great *prophet* or a great *king*. They understood nothing of a "Saviour-Priest," or a "Lamb of God." You would think that these priests and Levites who ministered about the temple and the sacrifices would have inquired about *the sacrifice*; but they apparently had no sense of sin—they were Abraham's seed.

They would have welcomed Messiah *on the throne*, but not *on the altar*.

1. In Genesis 4:4, we have the Lamb *typified*.
2. In Genesis 22:8, we have the Lamb *promised*.
3. In Exodus 12:5-7, we have the Lamb *slain and the blood applied*.
4. In Isaiah 53:1-7, we have the Lamb *personified—a man!*
5. In John 1:29, we have the Lamb *identified*.

6. In Revelation 5:6 & 13, we have the Lamb *magnified and glorified*.

Some Characteristics of the People of God

The people of God are a *faithful* people. They are faithful to the Lord, to the gospel, to the church, and to their pastors.

The people of God are a *grateful* people. While all honor and praise for all things is to be first given to the Lord, yet it is Christ-like and commendable to be grateful *for* one another and *to* one another for every labor of love.

The people of God are an *affectionate* people. Some ridicule and criticism has been cast on a show of genuine affection between believers; yet it was practiced by the early churches, to whom Paul four times says, "Greet one another with a holy kiss." *He* calls it a holy kiss as distinguished from that which is lustful and that which is common among relatives.

Believers are more to one another than just holders of common doctrine. They are brethren in the family of God, and they sincerely love one another with a deeper affection than natural men can know. If one is a stranger to this Christian love, he may well be a stranger to the Saviour's love; for Christ said, "Love one another as I have loved you."

Christ, Our First Love

Man's *affections* may be stirred by what he sees, man's *intelligence* may be informed by what he hears, and man's *conscience* may be convicted by what he feels; but to know Christ in a saving relationship, God must give him a *new heart*.

Repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus is a heart work, whereby we are brought not only to believe God and to trust Christ, but to genuinely love him—to love him for himself and to love him above all others.

It is not that the believer has no struggle with the flesh and the world—he does. But he has a *first love*—Christ! Those which would vie for his affection and attention must settle for a lesser place, for Christ has won his heart.

Preach the Gospel No Matter What

“Scarcely a Baptist minister of standing will own me,” Spurgeon wrote in a letter to a friend. And in another letter he commented that preachers of his day “are afraid of real *gospel* Calvinism.” The eminent Thomas Binney, after hearing a sermon in which Spurgeon preached against freewill and Arminianism, declared, “I never heard such things in my life before.”

Good Works Reveal True Faith

Do not be deceived by false preachers and wicked persons who preach that it does not matter how a person lives provided he believes in Jesus Christ, or that knowledge of theology is sufficient without obedience to Christ in conduct. This is not true! One cannot separate faith and conduct. As a tree is known by its fruit, so a righteous man is known by his works. Good fruit does not make a tree good but *shows* it to be good; so good works do not make us righteous (only Christ can do that), but good works reveal true faith in Jesus Christ.

A church member who practices sin and disobedience to the commandments of Christ is not of God, but takes his character from the evil one. He imitates Satan, not Christ. Christ came not only to deliver us from the penalty of sin but also from the power and practice of sin.

He that is regenerated by the Spirit of God, in whom Christ is formed, who is a new creature in Christ, does not make sin his practice and the course of his life. He is not without the motions of sin within nor free from sinful thoughts, words, and even sinful deeds; but he does not give himself up to sin, excuse it, justify it, nor continue therein! Sin, even in thought, is distasteful and hateful to one who loves Christ and desires to be like him.

“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.”

Works Without Faith and Faith Without Works

Faith that has no works is a dead, useless, false faith! Works without faith are dead works. Good works are second acts, necessarily flowing from a life of faith in Christ. By these works and labors of love, there is clear evidence that faith is alive and active. Good works are not infallible proof of genuine faith, but the *absence* of good works is certain proof of the absence of faith.

Living Water

You know that there are some who preach a salvation that does not save. They teach that one may be a child of God today and lost again tomorrow. That is like the water in Jacob’s well; “Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again.” But Christ’s salvation is of a very different kind; “Whosoever drinketh of the water that *I shall give him* shall never thirst.”

The Wisdom That is From Above

But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.

James 3:17

You can be sure that when our attitudes and words create strife, confusion, and division, it is not the wisdom of God. Where wise men and women worship, there is love, peace, and unity.

The wisdom which is from God is *pure*! When the heart entertains pure and good thoughts of others, the mouth speaks accordingly.

It is peaceable. “If it be possible, as much as in you lieth, live peaceably with all men.” Men who desire peace, speak peacefully.

It is *gentle*, mild, courteous, and patient. To contend for truth is not to be harsh and cruel as some suppose. Gentleness is the fruit of the Spirit, an attribute of Christ and also of his servants.

It is *easy to be entreated* or willing to listen to any word of wisdom, reason, and explanation; and it is quick to forgive. A forgiving heart is not a sign of weakness but of wisdom.

It is *full of mercy and good fruits*. Wisdom knows that God makes men to differ. He makes rich and poor, strong and weak. So there is always the desire to share what God has given with those who have less.

It is *without partiality*. Wisdom does not judge by outward appearance, skin color, or power to reimburse. It is no respecter of men’s persons, but reaches out to all.

It is *without hypocrisy*. True spiritual wisdom in Christ is straightforward, open-faced, and genuine. How can anyone be so foolish as to play the game of religion before God, who searches and knows the heart?

“Keep thine heart, for out of it are the issues of life.”

I Was Glad

I was glad when they said unto me, let us go into the house of the Lord.

Psalm 122:1

I was glad that I had a *desire* to go, that I had the *strength* to go, that I *understood* the words spoken there, that I *loved* the people assembled there, that I, the chief of sinners, *should be permitted* to come into his presence. “Bless the Lord, O my soul!”

A New Nature

The person who says, “I am saved by grace alone and it does not matter how I talk, walk, or conduct my life,” is a fool and neither understands nor loves the grace of God. Our union with the Lord Jesus not only justifies and sanctifies us before the law of God and the court of heaven, but that same regenerating union implants within and imparts unto us *a new nature* which delights in the principles and actions of holiness.

One cannot separate the blessings of Christ from the indwelling presence of Christ. “He that *loveth* not *knoweth* not!” Learning the doctrine will not produce a new creature, but learning *Christ* will!

To Be Like Christ

My determined purpose, my greatest desire, my soul and heart’s sincere hope is three-fold:

1. “That I may win Christ and be found in him;” not trusting nor having any self-achieved righteousness of my own, but possessing that genuine righteousness of God which comes through a living union with Christ by faith.

2. “That I may know him.” I do know him, but I want progressively to become more deeply and intimately acquainted with him and the wonders of his person; that I may come to know the power flowing from his resurrection and the strength it gives to believers; that I may know and share his sufferings so as to be continually transformed into his likeness, daily dying to sin and the world.

3. “That I may attain to the resurrection of the dead.” Certainly we want to have a part in that first resurrection in the great day; but perhaps Paul is referring here to a spiritual resurrection that lifts us out of the death, darkness, and corruption of this world.

The world, flesh, and all of this human life is death. In Christ there is real life, real love, real holiness. There is communion with God and perfect righteousness. This is what the believer wants. By whatever means it pleases God, I want to be like Christ in attitude, spirit, and heart.

Go to Him

It is a scriptural fact that a guilty sinner can do nothing to justify himself before God. *Salvation is of the Lord*—the free gift of his grace in and through Christ. We are righteous because of Christ’s obedience, we are justified because Christ died, and we are accepted because Christ intercedes for us.

What shall we do if we are concerned about our sins? What shall we do if we desire to be redeemed, to know the Lord in saving grace? Shall we sit down and wait for the lightning to strike? Shall we fold our arms and wait to find out if we are among the favored flock?

This would not satisfy Bartimaeus, who would not be denied, but cried out, “Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me!” This was not the way of the woman of Canaan, whose daughter was sick, who was willing to take even the crumbs. She cried after him until he spoke the words of peace.

Nor will it be the way of any man who is genuinely convinced of sin, righteousness, and judgement. He will make use of the means of grace. He must have Christ, and he will seek the Lord with all his heart. He will seek Christ in the Scriptures, in the sermon, in the assembly of God’s people; and he will be willing to give up anything which prevents a living union with the Lord of Glory.

When the seeking sinner sees sin in its true light (heinous), when he sees the world as it is (vanity), when he sees Christ in his redemptive glory (eternal joy), he will be done with talking, reasoning, rationalizing, and theorizing; and he will flee to Christ. As one old writer said, “Sink or swim, I go to him.”

To Die in Your Sins

Christ said, “If ye believe not that I am He, ye shall die in your sins.” Better to die any death than to die in your sins. If you die in your sins, you will rise in your sins, you will stand at the judgment in your sins, and you will spend eternity in your sins! Better not to be born than to die in your sins.

Faith Should Permeate All Aspects of Your Life

Mr. Spurgeon once said, “Sincere seekers after righteousness quietly dissolve their faith and godliness in their lives and sweeten all their common relationships therewith. The real believer flavors his ordinary life with grace, so that his wife, his children, his fellow-workmen, and his neighbors are the better for it.”

A man's faith ought to be what smell is to the rose and what light is to the sun. A good attitude and spirit toward all should be the outcome of indwelling grace. A division of the secular and the spiritual is fatal to both. In true grace they are forever united. "Out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaketh" or "as a man thinketh in his heart, so is he."

In Christ

No man knoweth the Father, save the Son and he to whom the Son will reveal him.

Matthew 11:27

Men may believe in God, but there is no way that they can know the living God except in Christ. They may know of his existence, but his essence and glory are only revealed in Christ. They may know of his works, but his will and wisdom are only seen in Christ. They may know of his power, but his purpose and decrees are only revealed in Christ. They may be acquainted with his miracles, but his mercy and grace are only received in Christ. They may behold his judgments, but his justice satisfied and honored is only revealed in Christ.

If we miss a saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus, we may talk of God all our lives and never really know him.

Sovereign Mercy

Mercy that is not sovereign is merited and, therefore, not mercy at all. Grace that is not sovereign is earned and, therefore, not grace. God said, "I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy" (Ex. 33:19).

See Him

He that seeth the Son and believeth on him hath eternal life.

John 6:40

Put the emphasis where it belongs—“He that *seeth* the Son.” Look to Christ, lay hold upon Christ, and learn of Christ. In him and through him you will be led into all truth. We do not arrive at Christ by getting our doctrines straight; we come to a right understanding of doctrine and theology by seeing Christ.

Someone asked Mr. Spurgeon, “What body of divinity do you recommend?” He replied, “I have never heard of but one body that divinity ever had and that was the body of our Lord Jesus, and the study of that body of divinity will make you systematic theologians of the best kind.”

If you are to understand anything of astronomy, you must begin at the center: the sun. And if you put anything else in the center of your system of teaching and doctrine except the Lord Jesus Christ, you will only fall into more and more error and confusion. A true sight of Christ reveals all that is *in Christ*; and, according to the Word, God was in Christ reconciling the world. “He that hath seen me hath seen the Father.” *He* that has *seen* Christ has seen the Father, seen the Spirit, and will, in God’s own time, see all the rest.

Another important thing: a true revelation of Christ will take care of some unpleasant things that we see. I see sin in myself, but *I see* him as my righteousness and sin offering! I see trial and sorrows every day, but *I see him* caring for me and in his good providence working them all together for my good! I see death and judgement approaching; but *I see him*, my Justifier, the resurrection and the life! I see friends and neighbors in darkness, ignorance, and unbelief; but *I see him* who is able to save to the uttermost them that come to God by him! I see Satan and the forces of evil seeking the destruction of Christ’s church; but *I see him*, who is the conqueror of the prince of this world, and remember his promise, “The gates of hell shall not prevail.”

My friends, if you can see him, you will find that that one sight will make amends for the dark things you see!

Scholars in Experience

Be true to truth, but not turbulent and scornful. Restore such as are fallen; help them up again with all the compassion of Christ. Set the broken bones with the grace of the gospel.

Confident believer, despise not weak believers; you may someday come to wish even to be in their state. Be faithful to the infirmities of others, realizing especially your own! Visit the sick, the elderly, and the lonely; they are usually scholars in experience.

Be content with little of the world and covet more faith.

The Sacrifice of Himself

What did Christ offer to God? He made a sacrifice of *himself*. It is true that he sacrificed his rest, his honor, his reputation, and his life; but the essence of his sacrifice was *himself*. “He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself” (Heb. 9:26). “Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree” (1 Pet. 2:24).

By himself he honored the law and enabled the Lawgiver to be just and merciful.

The Lord Knows Them That are His

Jehovah-jireh: The Lord will provide. (Gen. 22:13-14)

Jehovah-rapha: The Lord that healeth. (Ex. 15:26)

Jehovah-nissi: The Lord our banner. (Ex. 17:8-15)

Jehovah-shalom: The Lord our peace. (Judges 6:24)

Jehovah-ra-ah: The Lord my shepherd. (Ps. 23:1)

Jehovah-tsidkenu: The Lord our righteousness. (Jer. 23:6)
Jehovah-shammah: The Lord is present. (Ez. 48:35)

“He hath known my *name*” (Ps. 91:14)

Cast All On Christ

The most difficult thing for any of us to do is to *totally* and *completely* trust and rest in our blessed Lord Jesus to redeem us, sanctify us, and make us accepted of the Father. We are so prone to self-righteousness and works that we have a constant battle trying to remember that “man at his *best state* is altogether vanity,” but also that man in his *weakest moments*, is no less loved and accepted if he is in Christ.

As Bro. Fortner said, “My relationship with the eternal God (in Christ) does in great measure determine what I do. But what I do (good or bad) in no way determines my relationship with the eternal God.” Actually, “In my flesh dwelleth *no good thing*.” It is in Christ that the Father is well-pleased; and only in Christ can he love, accept, and be pleased with me.

I did not come to Christ on the basis of my works, nor am I kept in Christ on the basis of my works! I looked to him *then* for *all things*, and I look to him *now* for *all things*! Any look within will serve only to discourage and depress me; but, looking to Christ, the author and finisher of my faith, will only encourage me, for he never changes. His gift of life and calling to grace is without change.

The command, “Look unto me and be ye saved,” is not only the hope and strength of the seeking sinner, but it is the constant hope and strength of the believing sinner. I know my sins, but I rejoice in his grace. I know my weakness, but I rest in his strength. I know my emptiness, but I am complete in him.

“O what peace we often forfeit, O what needless pain we bear” all because we do not cast our sins and our souls on Christ and *leave them there!*

Christ Did Not Suffer in Vain

God has declared in his Word that he will show mercy, that he will redeem and glorify a people, and that heaven will be populated with a holy people like his beloved Son. And here is the greatest evidence that his promise will be fulfilled: “He that spared not his own son.”

The Father did not withhold the Son from all that he must be, endure, suffer, and accomplish in order to take up our hopeless case and redeem us. He gave Christ to be our representative, sacrifice, sin-offering, and mediator.

If God so loved that he gave Christ, and Christ so loved that he gave himself, shall we *not* freely and abundantly receive all that he purchased for us? Did our Lord suffer in vain? Perish the thought!

The Two-Fold Message of Grace

The most humbling and challenging thing that I face—the great concern of my heart—is that my generation experience a return to the preaching of the gospel of God’s grace. This generation is plagued with a gospel of works and are strangers to the gospel of redemption. I want a return to the message used of God in other days to awaken men to their need and to reveal the grace and glory of the Lord Jesus.

Rolfe Barnard used to say, “The two-fold message of grace is: (1) all flesh is grass and (2) behold your God!” This is the message that takes away all of the glory and dignity of the flesh and proclaims the redemptive glory of Christ.

The results of this message will be a sense of the awesome holiness of God, the inability and sinfulness of the flesh, and the total sufficiency of the person and work of Christ. Perhaps once against we will hear men and women cry,

“Depth of mercy! Can there be,
Mercy still reserved for me?”

Can my God his wrath forbear,
Me, the chief of sinners, spare?"

True Humility

True humility is to have a right estimate of one's self. It is not to deny or underestimate true ability, real knowledge, and obvious gifts. A gifted singer knows he can sing. An intelligent person is aware of his knowledge. A successful businessman knows his business. An artist knows his skills. It is not humility to speak what one does not truly feel.

True humility is born when one discovers the *source* of all gifts, talents, and knowledge. "*Who* maketh thee to differ?" It is certain that we are different and some have what others do not have in different areas. But it is the Lord God, in his sovereign will, who has given us all that which we have. "Without him we can do nothing." "A man can receive nothing except it be *given* him from heaven!"

The higher a man grows in the grace of God, the lower he will be in his own eyes. A man who has been introduced to what really happened in the garden of Eden and what really happened on the cross of Calvary will have no problem with pride and arrogance. Apart from the mercy and grace of God, he knows *where* he could be and he knows *what* he could be! "I am what I am by the grace of God."

Forgiveness

The fact that we constantly need Divine forgiveness ought to encourage us to forgive. Another may do many things for me, but no man can forgive my enemies but *I myself*! You may say, "I will never forgive." Then, for your sake, I hope you never sin!

Forgiveness is not only something I owe to others, it is something I owe to myself. And I do myself great harm by holding grudges.

Things that Promote Peace

“Let us therefore follow after the things which promote peace, and things wherewith one may edify another.”

Romans 14:19

1. Be careful to *love* one another with a true heart. “Love covers a multitude of failures.”

2. Avoid a spirit of *argument and debate*. One may win an argument and lose a friend.

3. Beware of *jealousy*. Jealousy destroys happiness and builds suspicion.

4. Beware of *envy*. Let us learn to rejoice in another’s gifts, blessings, and happiness. God gives as *he* will!

5. Do not *meddle* in the private lives and domestic affairs of others.

6. Guard against a *touchy temper*:

“For every trifling thing to take offense
Shows either great pride or little sense.”

7. Learn to keep a *confidence*. “He that repeateth a matter separateth very friends.”

8. Strive to *heal differences*. “Blessed are the peacemakers.”

9. Be always ready to *forgive anything*. “Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.”

Bulletin Articles of Henry Mahan For the Year 1986

The Christ

All who are born of God believe that Jesus is! The title *The Christ* signifies “anointed” and includes all the offices of the Son of God.

To believe him to be the Christ is to believe him to be that Prophet which Moses said should come, who has declared the whole mind and will of the Father. It is to believe he is that Priest that should arise after the order of Melchizedek and make atonement for sin and intercede for transgressors. It is to believe that he is that King whom the Father has set over *all things*!

This faith is not a mere assent to the facts nor the knowledge which devils have, but it is a *heart faith* and *love for* him and his glory.

We See!

John 9:41

Our Lord said unto the religious leaders, “If you were blind, you should have no sin; but now you say, *we see*; therefore, your sin remaineth.”

The simple meaning of these words of Christ to the Pharisees is this: if you were blind and sensible of it, and knew yourselves to be in sin and spiritual darkness, and if you were desirous of the grace of

God and the light of his glory and truth, your sin would not be imputed to you. God would have mercy on you and pardon your transgressions. For he came into the world to save sinners, to give sight to the blind, and to set the captive free.

But now you say, “We see!” You think yourselves to be wise and knowing; you stand in no need of a miracle of grace. You need not the light of the glory of God in the face of Christ Jesus. You think that you have righteousness and the key of knowledge. You shut your eyes against the clear evidence against you. Therefore, your sins rest upon you and are not laid on Christ.

They sinned willfully against both light and knowledge in rejecting Christ the Messiah! They sinned the sin against the Holy Ghost, who came to reveal Christ, and this sin is never forgiven.

In Him

If we lean upon the promises of God themselves and not upon Jesus Christ, in whom the promises are given, all will come to nothing! “For all the promises of God *in him* are yea, and *in him* Amen, unto the glory of God by us” (2 Cor. 1:20).

Love in Truth

Let us not merely profess with our tongues that we love one another, but let us prove it by deeds; for this is the only way of truly showing love. Talking about love is mere show. Demonstrating love in meeting the physical, material, and emotional needs of others is *love in truth!*

No one truly has the love of God in him or a love for the brethren unless he demonstrates that love and care when the occasion presents itself.

Love says, “If you have a need, what I have is yours.”

Don't Chew on the Briars

There is not a preacher—living or dead—with whom you cannot find fault, either in what he says, what he writes, or what he does. Perfection is only found in our Lord. “I find no fault in *him*.” His ambassadors, however, are human and not only subject to mistakes, but prone to error, except they are kept, led, and taught by the Holy Spirit.

Let us be patient with one another, pray for one another, and look for the good and not the bad. Don't chew on the briars in a message or an article. Even a donkey knows enough to eat the hay and spit out the briars!

A Perfect Robe of Righteousness

The moment a man believes in the Lord Jesus Christ he is in, of, and blessed with the righteousness of Christ (Rom. 4:3). He is perfectly holy before God!

Long ago Pastor Weaver of London, England told about a friend who was very poor and dressed practically in rags. The pastor took him to his home and gave him a shirt and a suit of clothes. When the man was fully dressed in pastor Weaver's suit, he stood before the pastor and asked, “Well, Mr. Weaver, what do you think of me now?” Mr. Weaver replied, “I think you look very respectable.” The man wisely said, “Yes, I do; but it is not me. I am not respectable; it is your clothes that are respectable.”

My friends, it is not you, but the righteousness of Christ which makes you acceptable before God. “Your renown went forth among the heathen for thy beauty; for it was *perfect through my comeliness*, which I put upon thee, saith the Lord God” (Ez. 16:14).

Rejoicing in Trials and Afflictions

1 Peter 4:12-13

Vs. 12. “Beloved believers, do not be amazed and bewildered by difficult trials and afflictions which come upon you.” Afflictions, trials, and sufferings are the common lot of God’s people in all ages. God has only one Son without sin—none without suffering! For even Christ our Lord suffered hatred, reproach, and contradiction (Jn. 16:1-3; 33). Trials in the life of a believer are not by chance but are by appointment and according to the will of God (Phil. 1:29). Trials and afflictions try the graces of believers.

1. They try our faith, which becomes more precious through trials.
2. They try our love for Christ, which cannot be dimmed or drowned in the floods of suffering.
3. They try our hope of eternal life, weaning us from fleshly foundations.
4. They try our profession of religion, revealing whether it is in Christ’s person or in the loaves and fishes he provides (Jn. 2:23-25).

Trials are not strange and unusual for the true believer, but they are the common lot of all who will live godly in Christ Jesus (2 Tim. 3:12).

Vs. 13. Rejoice and glory in trials and afflictions brought upon you by the will of God and for the sake of the gospel of Christ (2 Cor. 12:9-10).

1. Rejoice that the hand of God is upon you in mercy, making you like Christ, creating saving graces in you, and counting you worthy to suffer for his glory.
2. Rejoice that you are blessed to share the sufferings of Christ, being identified with him in a world that rejects and hates him (Jn. 15:18-20).

Three True Statements

Long ago someone wrote:

1. Because God is a living God, he *can* hear us!
2. Because God is a loving God, he *will* hear us!
3. Because God is a covenant God in Christ, he has *bound himself to hear all* who call upon him through Christ Jesus!

True Conversion

True conversion gives a man pardon but does not make him presumptuous.

True conversion gives a man rest but does not make him less watchful.

True Confession

Paul wrote, “With the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation” (Rom. 10:10).

There must be no confession of the mouth where there is no genuine believing with the heart. But when true faith is found in the heart, there will be a bold, firm, and continual confession of Christ in *word, works, and will*. This confession of Christ embraces the whole of a person’s life.

I do not think that a person merely saying, “I accept Jesus as my personal Saviour, and I will be baptized and join the church,” is what Paul teaches here as confessing Christ with the mouth. Confessing *Christ* is the whole of a person’s life, revealing outwardly what God has worked inwardly. It is the confession by word, act, deed, and attitude of what God, by his Spirit, has created within our heart.

“One tree is not a forest,” it has been said. So one public act is not a confession of Christ.

True Believers

True believers do not need bumper stickers on their cars and buttons on their coat lapels in order to inform others that they love and believe in the Lord Jesus. If a person is a child of God and redeemed by Christ, in whom the Spirit of God dwells, those about him will become aware of it very shortly.

True Understanding

There is no understanding of the death of Jesus Christ—it’s efficacy, sufficiency, or glory—unless one has some understanding of *the person of Christ!* “What manner of man is this?”

Love Your Family in Christ

1 Peter 3:8 says, “Love as brethren.” This would be to love all believers, to love as Christ loved us, to love without hypocrisy, to love, not in word only, but in both deed and truth, and to love continually; for true love never dies!

How will this love be expressed? In praying for one another, in forgiving one another, in sharing with one another both temporal and spiritual blessings, and in seeking out one another for fellowship and encouragement. Don’t wait for a brother to come to you; go to him.

The Life Preserver

Someone said, “It is not the life buoy on board the ship that saves the man who is drowning, nor is it his belief that the buoy is able to save! No! He must have the buoy around his body, or his hand upon it, or he will perish.”

It will not save my soul only to know that Christ is the Saviour (though this I must know), or that his atonement is sufficient to save. I must trust and embrace him by faith. There must be, as Paul said in 2 Timothy 1:12, a *committal* to Christ Jesus. By faith I rest my weary, troubled, and sinful soul on Christ alone.

“Out of my bondage, sorrow, and night,
Jesus, I come! Jesus, I come!
Into thy freedom, gladness, and light,
Jesus, I come to thee!”

Put on the New Man

To “put on the new man” is not to make ourselves new creatures in Christ, for this is God’s work and not man’s. It is God who regenerates and creates a new man in true righteousness and holiness.

But to “put on the new man” is to walk daily according to the Biblical principles of grace and holiness formed in us. Walk in the Spirit of Christ and avoid not only the works of evil but the very appearance of evil (1 Thess. 5:22).

Justified by Faith

The account in Romans of how Abraham was justified and received righteousness by faith was not recorded for his sake alone nor applicable only to him, but it is by faith that every believer is justified and sanctified. Righteousness shall be imputed to us, as well

as to Abraham, *if we believe God*, who is identified in Romans 4:23-25 by the fact that he raised Jesus our Lord from the dead.

To believe for salvation is not to believe only in the existence of God, but to believe on him in regard to his gospel! Saving faith involves the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ, who was promised of God, sent by God, bruised by God, raised by God, and seated victoriously on the Father's right hand.

Rejoice

Did you know that the word *rejoice* is used ten times in the book of Philippians? I pray that we may learn the word in heart and experience as well as in doctrine. There is always cause to *rejoice in the Lord!*

Rejoice in his blood, which cleanses. Rejoice in his righteousness, which sanctifies. Rejoice in his providence, which works all things together for our good. Rejoice in his intercession, which is continual and effectual. Rejoice that your names are written in the Book of Life.

Regeneration

He who is regenerated by the Spirit of God, in whom Christ is formed, who is a new creature in Christ, does not make sin his practice and the course of his life. He is not without the motions of sin within nor free from thoughts, words, and deeds of sin (which he despises); but he does not give himself up to sin, excuse it, nor continue in it as its servant. God's nature and the grace of the Holy Spirit abide in him, and he cannot practice a life of sin. He is born of God and delights in the commandments of his Lord.

A life of disobedience is distasteful to a believer who longs to be like Christ. A godly walk and a spirit of love and grace are evidences of grace and faith. The absence of these is evidence of the absence of grace.

Reflections on Thirty-Six Years

If any man serve ME, him will my Father honor.

John 12:26

It was thirty-six years ago that God was pleased to reveal his Son and the gospel of his glory and grace in me and to this church. Since that time we have endeavored to preach the gospel of his free and sovereign grace regardless of the cost, the consequences, or the results. Our message, our doctrine, and our emphasis on the person and effectual work of the dear Redeemer is totally unchanged from that time in 1950 to this day and, by his mercy, will not change!

The Lord has been pleased to bless us—Oh, how he has blessed us, enlarged our borders, and extended our ministry around the world. To God be the glory! I encourage you to pray for me, for the television ministry, and for the conferences and church meetings here and abroad. God opens the doors without our promotion, he supplies the need without our begging, and he reveals Christ to sinners without any compromise of his truth.

If I could leave one strong, solemn word to young pastors and preachers, it would be, “Preach, without compromise, the divine, incarnate, crucified, risen, victorious, exalted Christ! Look not to, nor lean upon, the arm of flesh in any way. Know no man after the flesh. Enter not into the ways and means of well-meaning religionists who suggest shortcuts to success.”

There are no shortcuts nor doors which we can open by fleshly methods. God will honor the *Son*, and he will honor and use men who honor the Son.

Paid in Full

If there is one penny of that debt unpaid which Christ was engaged to satisfy, it would not be consistent with the holy justice of

God to admit him into heaven as our forerunner, much less to sit down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.

But thanks be unto God, “Jesus paid it all—all the debt I owe.”

Salvation is of the Lord

*But I will sacrifice unto thee with the voice of thanksgiving;
I will pay that that I have vowed. Salvation is of the Lord.*

Jonah 2:9

It is of the Lord in its *origination* (Eph. 1:3-4).

It is of the Lord in its *execution* (Isa. 53:10).

It is of the Lord in its *application* (Gal. 1:15).

It is of the Lord in its *sustaining power* (1 Pet. 1:5).

It is of the Lord in its *ultimate perfection* (Phil. 3:20-21).

I am Not Ashamed of the Gospel

I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, of mercy to the guilty through Christ, nor of salvation by substitution. Though it may be foolishness to the natural man and a stumbling block to the religious, I am not ashamed to believe it, love it, and preach it.

Some in religion reveal that they cannot bear the reproach or offense of the gospel; for, while they may own it in private, they will not preach it in public. Some seek to cover the offense of the cross with words of man’s wisdom and human philosophy. But, what I believe, I shall believe, even if I believe it alone.

Live Unto Christ

This natural body is a dying body, subject to afflictions, diseases, infirmities, and eventually *death*! But if the Spirit of God dwells in us (by grace through faith), death is not the end; for he that raised Christ from the dead shall also, in his appointed time, raise our bodies from the grave (1 Cor. 15:12-22; 42-44). This body shall not always be in corruption and ruin but shall be raised in the image of Christ (1 Jn. 3:1-3).

Therefore, since our primary interest is not the flesh, materialism, and things of the world, but the kingdom of God and his righteousness—since to be fleshly minded is a sign of absence of the Spirit of Christ, and since our flesh and all pertaining thereunto shall die and we shall be raised in his likeness—we are not obligated to live for the flesh and this world, but to live unto Christ, who loved us and gave himself for us.

Men and women who are freed from condemnation and death are not freed from obedience to Christ—nor do they want to be! To whom much is given and forgiven, he will love much. We are motivated to holiness by his love for us and our love for him (2 Cor. 5:14-15).

The Power and Wisdom of God

When Paul came to Corinth to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ (“the testimony of God,”); because it bears a testimony to his love, grace, and mercy in giving his beloved Son to be our Saviour and Redeemer, he did not preach this gospel in lofty words of eloquence, or human philosophy, or man’s wisdom and intellect. He was resolved to make nothing the subject of his ministry and message “save Jesus Christ and him crucified.” That which was the greatest offense to others was the most delightful thing to him because he knew that salvation comes only through and by the obedience and death of Jesus Christ.

As Paul determined, so he acted! His subject matter was not nature, arts, sciences, philosophy, nor dry morality, but salvation from sin through the crucified Christ. His style of preaching, his language, and his messages were delivered not in human logic, wisdom, and persuasion, but in the power and demonstration of the Holy Spirit.

When the Holy Spirit, through the preaching of the gospel of Christ, reveals the sin and inability of the human heart; when eyes are given to see the glory of God in Christ Jesus, the believing sinner's confidence and assurance is not in the preacher, nor in the preacher's personality, nor in a reasonable system of doctrine, but in Christ alone, who is the power and the wisdom of God.

Faith

The mere knowledge of facts about the Bible, even about the person and work of Christ, will not save us unless that knowledge leads us to really and truly *trust* our souls in the blessed Redeemer's hands.

Faith must act in this fashion: "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, that he came to save sinners; and therefore, as a sinner, I rest myself on him. I know that his righteousness and blood justified the ungodly; therefore, I trust him to be both my righteousness and my redemption before God."

The Righteousness of Christ

My salvation never depended on *my* righteousness, and my assurance now does not depend on *my* righteousness. John Jasper, when asked, "What right do you have to be in heaven?" replied, "I am not here on my righteousness but on the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ."

Paul said, "By the grace of God I am what I am."

A Throne of Grace

Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

Hebrews 4:16

We are coming, not to a throne of law, nor to a throne of strict justice, but to a *throne of grace*. The words *throne*, *majesty*, *power*, and *omnipotence* all leave me awed and frightened; but the soft, gentle word *grace* stirs my spirit and heart to venture nigh in sincerity, humility, and hope!

For, though there are a thousand defects in my prayers, it is a throne of *grace*. Though there are many defects in my knowledge, it is a throne of *grace*. Though there are so many weaknesses in my spirit, it is a throne of *grace*. Though my faith is so weak and dishonoring to the King, it is a throne of *grace*.

Grace loves, grace forgives, grace abounds, grace is sufficient; and his grace is greater than all my sins.

“Marvelous, infinite, matchless grace;
Grace that exceeds our sin and our guilt;
Yonder on Calvary’s mount outpoured,
There where the blood of the Lamb was spilt.”

Keep Yourselves From Idols

Little children, keep yourselves from idols.

1 John 5:21

Keep yourselves from anything or anyone that would occupy the place in your heart, affections, and thoughts due to *God alone*! Keep yourselves from images, superstitions, traditions, religious practices, and religious observances which are not according to the Scriptures

and glorifying to God alone. “We worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh” (Phil. 3:3).

Pride

Pride is a strange and mysterious thing, and our natural thoughts do not help us to understand it. In times of recognition and some success in the ministry, I have had people say, “I pray that the Lord will keep you *humble*.” I would much rather that they pray the Lord would give me more wisdom, grace, and the opportunity to preach his gospel to many sinners.

If a man knows Christ, rejoices only in him, and has no confidence in the flesh, how it pleases God to use him and what God is pleased to do through him *does not make him proud!* It is when a man moves in the strength of the flesh, tries to be what he is not, and tries to do what he is not called to do that pride is to be feared.

It all depends on one’s being *where* God puts him, doing *what* God has called him to do. The first lesson any true servant of the Lord learns is, “Without me, ye can do nothing.” From then on, whether acclaimed or criticized by men, it matters not; for the glory of God and the gospel of Christ are my chief concern.

“Saviour, fix my soul on thee,
All ambition let me flee;
Nothing want beneath, above,
Happy only in thy love.”

In Hope of Eternal Life

In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began.

Titus 1:2

1. Eternal life is *a promise*, not a reward nor a wage, but a promise!
2. Eternal life is *the promise of God*, who, being the God of truth and faithfulness to his Word, cannot lie.
3. Eternal life is the promise of God *before the world began*, so it is not influenced by, nor dependent upon, anything that the world produces.

A Good Quote

“Forget injustices and neglect, but never forget a kindness nor an act of love!” I saw that on a wall. The author (whoever he may be) touched my heart and caused me to pray, “Lord, oh help me to do just that! Help me to actually and absolutely blot out of my mind all unpleasantries and every bad experience, and remember only the good times, the kind words, and the acts of love. Let me, in reference to every injustice and neglect, be like my Lord and *remember them no more!*” “And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more” (Heb. 10:17).

Be On Guard

Those who are so foolish as to allow *anything in their life* to cause them to renounce their faith in Christ and neglect their duty and privileges as children of the living God will, like Esau, someday weep with bitter tears when it is beyond their power to recover what is lost. Guard against apostasy and fleshly appetites; guard against neglecting

worship and daily communion with the Lord; guard against unwholesome companions and worldly social contacts; guard against covetousness and materialism lest you come, at last, to mourn bitterly your foolishness and wickedness.

We have entered a *race* and the prize goes to those who *finish* (Heb. 10:35-39). There will be difficult times, perhaps heavy trials; and along the way there will be tempting pastures of pleasure which appeal to the flesh. We must go on! We may proceed rapidly or slowly; we may even stumble and fall; but, looking to Christ, we continue.

I have a responsibility *to my Lord* and to the gospel of his grace. Neither the smiles nor the frowns of the world will cause me to surrender what I believe. I have a responsibility to the church, my brothers, my family, and to those whose lives I touch. By his grace, I must not allow anything to cause me to quit the race nor fail to see it through.

In 35 years of pastoring and preaching, I have seen many runners in this race. Those who finish and are crowned with glory are those who *continue faithful!* They lay aside the weights and sins which hinder; they look neither *back* to Egypt which they have left nor *around* at others who profess to run, but only *forward* to Christ, their goal.

They do not always maintain the same pace, for sometimes the track is smooth and sometimes it is rocky or muddy; but they are always moving in the same direction; "I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness."

My Grace is Sufficient For Thee

Grace is what I need—God's free, abundant, satisfying, sanctifying grace! I need grace to believe God and to continue in that faith. I need grace to give and forgive, grace to love and be loved, grace to live and grace to die.

If I have little grace, the fault is mine; for his grace is called “abundant grace.” The Lord may not give gold, but he will give grace. He may not give ease in life, but he will give grace in proportion to my need. He will certainly send me trials, but never without the grace to overcome. I may ask God for something which is not for my good and therefore he is not pleased to give it, but I may ask for as much grace as I will, and it will never be refused; for his throne is literally a throne a of grace!

“Lord, fill me with thy grace, make me an object of thy grace, let my lips speak of thy grace, and let my life be lived as a trophy of thy grace!”

We Can't All be Right

Some think that it does not matter what a man believes as long as he is sincere. The average churchgoer thinks that all religions are right. “You go to your church and I'll go to mine. You believe what you think is right and I'll believe what I think is right and we will all meet in heaven.”

My friends, we cannot all be right when we contradict one another so. It becomes every person to *search the scriptures* and see what God has said concerning eternal life, the person and work of his beloved Son, and how he can be both just and justifier.

True Faith

True faith throbs in a man's pulse, it looks out of his eyes, it lights up his countenance, it softens his touch, it mellows his voice, it bows his head, it bends his knee, it opens his hand, it soft-pedals his tongue, it breaks his heart, it orders his steps, and it gives him a hearing ear. He lives for Christ; and, if necessary, he would die for him.

Speaking the Truth in Love

I wonder, if when we preach or teach or witness to others, does the love of Christ and love for sinners come through in our words and in our countenance? I am interested to know if our hearers detect from our presentation of the gospel of sovereign grace (whether in sermon or articles) the love, compassion, and pity we should feel; or do we come across as harsh, bitter, and with a critical spirit? Do we tend to take our disappointments in some and our conflicts with others into the pulpit, or classroom, or personal discussions, and tear into everybody?

This is not the way of Christ. James said, “The wrath of man worketh *not* the righteousness of God.” It was his love that chose us, gave us repentance, and led us to faith; and if any other sinner is brought from darkness, death, and error to light, life, and truth, it will be by and through the love and grace of Christ.

We are quick to say that the whip of the law will not make a man righteous, but neither will the whip of doctrine make a man a believer.

Exhort and Encourage

One of the most encouraging signs of God’s blessings on this congregation is to see our men and women fellowshiping together in Christ and talking together about the Word of God and divine matters. Hebrews 3:13 says, “Exhort one another, encourage one another, instruct one another while the time of life lasts and while the grace of God is available.”

How can we do this?

1. By worshipping, praying, and praising God together.
2. By teaching, preaching, and studying the Scriptures.

3. By talking together about divine things and less about foolish things.

4. By a true, sincere, and affectionate interest in everyone's spiritual well-being.

5. By warning one another when we see signs of indifference and error of spirit or action.

The Offense of the Gospel

Paul declared in Galatians 5:11 that the offense of the gospel of the cross—of substitution—has never ceased nor will it ever cease. To suppose it has ceased is folly. The gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ is the gospel of grace, mercy, and peace; yet its history shows it to have been assailed with bitter hatred, rejection, and persecution through all ages. It is clearly offensive to the unregenerate mind whether in the pulpit, the pew, or the world. And there is no reason to believe that the gospel is one jot more palatable today than it used to be. *The world and the gospel are both unchanged!*

1. Its doctrine of an effectual atonement offends man's pride.

2. By addressing all men as guilty sinners offends man's dignity.

3. Declaring that heart knowledge can only be by the revelation of God offends man's wisdom.

4. Proclaiming the Lordship of Christ and obedience as a bond slave to him offend man's love of self and sin.

How do men show their contempt for the gospel of God's free grace in Christ?

1. By persecution of believers.

2. By refusing to preach the message of grace.

3. By mixing the grace of God with the works of men.

4. By accusing those who preach grace of being hyper-Calvinists, while they themselves cloud the issues and take the edge off the sword.

There are thousands of ways of showing that the gospel of free grace still offends us in one respect or the other.

Taught By The Spirit

If I am merely convinced by reason, a better reasoner may deceive me. If I hold a doctrinal opinion because it seems to me to be correct, I may be led to think differently another day. But, if the Holy Spirit has been my teacher and burned the gospel into my soul, what I have learned will never be unlearned.

To Believe Him to be The Christ

“Whosoever believeth that *Jesus is the Christ* is born of God,” and all who are born of God believe that Jesus is the Christ. The title *the Christ* signifies *anointed* and includes all the offices of the Son of God. To believe him to be *the Christ* is to believe him to be that Prophet which Moses said should come, who has declared the whole mind and will of the Father. It is to believe he is that Priest which should arise after the order of Melchizedek and make full atonement for sin and effectual intercession for transgressors. It is to believe he is King of kings and Lord of lords, whom God hath set over all things from all ages and for all time.

This faith in Christ is not a mere assent to his being *the Christ* nor merely acknowledging it as the demons have done (Lk. 4:41). It is to believe with the heart (Rom. 10:9-10). It is to bow the knee in repentance and to look to Christ, trust in him, receive him as our righteousness, to rest in his blood for cleansing, and to lay hold of him as our Savior, Redeemer, and Mediator.

Such faith is far above and beyond the reach of the human mind. It is the gift of God. It is the result of regeneration and a new birth, for we must be drawn to Christ and taught of God (Jn. 6:44-45).

Preaching and Prayer

I am not prepared to say which is more important or who does the better service; the man who preaches the gospel or the ones who pray for him as he preaches. I would not want one without the other! Often the kind of service which seems simple and commonplace to men is most precious to God. Spurgeon often said, when asked the secret of his pulpit power, "My people pray for me."

Because He Lives

Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him.

Romans 6:9

So we, being crucified with Christ, raised from the dead, and seated with him in the heavenlies, *will not go back* to our old way of life; to dead works and religious traditions, to laws and Sabbaths, to sin and corruption; but we live unto God!

Because he lives, we live also; for we are dead, and our life is hid with Christ in God. Like as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

Lay Aside These Things

Peter exhorts us to lay aside (to be done with) those things that are disagreeable and contrary to holiness and a spiritual life. Unfortunately, this is not a “once-for-all” accomplishment, but a continual effort through the grace of God to lay aside the following:

1. *Malice*. Ill-will and ill-feelings towards others. Malice is born of self-love and self-righteousness.

2. *Guile*, or deceit. This word is used for all dishonest ways of gaining our selfish goals. Let us be men and women who speak the truth and deal honestly with all men.

3. *Hypocrisy*. This is simply the opposite of sincerity. It is pretending to be what we are not and speaking with our lips that which is not in our hearts.

4. *Envy* is the natural effect of malice and reveals the absence of love. Envy is the uneasiness a person feels in the happiness, prosperity, or success of another.

5. *Evil speaking*. When we think of evil speaking, we usually think of blasphemy or dirty words; but perhaps the worst and most damaging form of evil speaking is slander, gossip, and criticism of others. Sowing discord among brethren, whispering, and fault-finding do not reveal a work of grace in the heart.

Peter’s exhortation is to lay these sins aside and, as newborn babes, to desire the sincere (pure, unmixed) Word of God that we may grow in grace, in knowledge, in love, in patience, in humility, and in faith.

Grace is to be Preferred to Gifts

If the gifts of miracles had continued in the church, they would have attracted the notice of people to the might and power of God in the physical realm rather than to his redemptive power and purpose

through Christ in the spiritual realm of the heart. “Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts.”

The unusual gifts in the early church served as signs and credentials until the Scriptures were completed (Heb. 2:1-4). Grace is to be preferred to gifts.

Seek Christ First

May I say something again that I have said many times? I will try to say it a bit differently and illustrate what I mean.

“Do not seek assurance—seek Christ! Do not seek peace first—seek Christ first and peace and assurance will follow.” You may have an assurance and not have Christ, just as you may enjoy the peace of a false profession, which is no peace. But you cannot truly know and have Christ without some assurance and peace.

You must have the *root* of grace before you enjoy the *flower* of peace. Suppose a child sees flowers blooming in the yard, goes and picks several of the prettiest blooms, and makes her own little garden of flowers. She stands back, admiring the blossoms, and says, “Now, what a fine flower garden I have!” But, to her dismay, the next day all of the blooms are withered and dead. They looked good for a while; but, having no root, no source of life, they died.

Such is peace without Christ; it does not last very long. It would be better to plow the ground, plant the seeds of grace, and wait until they sprout; then you will have the living flowers, not borrowed flowers. If you try to have peace before grace, you have a flower without root. If you seek assurance before you seek Christ, you may attain unto some measure of confidence; but it will not last because *he* is our peace, our assurance, and our hope.

Love Your Brother

Nothing can be more contradictory than for a man to say, “I love God and hate my brother.” A man cannot love God and hate the image of God before his eyes; for God is before us in those who bear his image and the likeness of his Son (1 Jn. 3:23-24).

Our Walk

We are redeemed from death and sin to life and glory by the free grace of God through faith in Christ, and this faith is the gift of God (Eph. 2:8-9). However, lest the apostle should give the impression that good works and a holy life are unnecessary, he adds, “We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus, *unto good works.*”

The Spirit that lives in us is the Spirit of love, joy, faith, humility, and righteousness. Our calling is a holy calling; our Father is a merciful and holy Father; our walk is with him.

The Sin Unto Death – Apostasy

If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it. All unrighteousness is sin: and there is a sin not unto death. We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not. And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness. And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life. Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen.

1 John 5:16-21

John has been writing about prayer and encouraging believers to pray with confidence that God will hear us and grant those petitions that are according to his will. And those who have an interest at the throne of grace should make use of it for others, especially for weak brothers and for those who are overtaken with sin.

We are encouraged to pray for the lost, that God will save them (Rom. 10:1); but this verse says if a brother (a born-again member of the church) is observed to sin (as the best of men do in word, thought, and deed) or falls into sin, we are to pray for him! God will hear and give the brother life, by which may be comfort and peace, causing him to live cheerfully and not be swallowed up with sorrow and despair. Of course, the brother does not continue in the sin; he has a sense of it, a sorrow for it, is ashamed of it, and forsakes it.

But “there *is* a sin unto *death*,” which is not only deserving of death, as all sin is, but which shall certainly lead to death for all who commit it, without exception. John Gill says, “This sin unto death is the sin against the Holy Spirit; it is sinning willfully, not in a practical, but a doctrinal way, by denying the truth of the gospel of Christ.” John Calvin says, “This sin unto death is not a partial fall or a

transgression of a single commandment, but apostasy, by which men alienate themselves from Christ and surrender themselves to Satan. We ought not rashly to conclude that any professed believer has apostatized; love should make us believe the best; but, if one has departed, let us not contend with the justice of God nor seek to be more merciful than he is!”

We are not urged to pray for apostates.

Spurgeon on Spiritual Depression

Mr. Spurgeon, in a message preached when he was 54 years old, confessed to times of great depression of spirit. “I felt a great heaviness of spirit. I knew that I believed, but somehow I could not get comfort from the truth I preached. I even began to wonder whether I was really saved. Being on holiday, I went to hear a brother preach. While he preached a sermon full of gospel, tears flowed from my eyes, and I was in such joy on hearing the gospel that I said, ‘O yes, there is spiritual life within me, for I hear the gospel, love the gospel, and the gospel can touch my heart and stir my soul.’”

What a grand evidence to every believer—nothing moves us, stirs us, or comforts us like the gospel of our Lord Jesus!

Supporting Those who Preach the Gospel

The Apostle Paul has much to say about *giving*. He calls it a *grace* (2 Cor. 8:7). He has much to say about *liberality and generosity*, saying that it “proves the sincerity of your love” for Christ and others (2 Cor. 8:8). And he has a lot to say about the church’s care and support of those who preach the gospel.

I have had very little to say on this subject because this congregation is so generous and gracious to *all*, especially to God’s preachers, pastors, and missionaries. But the attitude and actions of

some (who call themselves men and women of grace) toward young pastors and preachers has come to my attention; and to say the least, *I am shocked!*

Do you not know that they who preach the gospel are to live *off* the gospel? (2 Cor. 9:14). Do you not know that when a man studies, prepares messages, preaches the gospel to you, and ministers to you in spiritual matters he is to share in your material gain? (2 Cor. 9:11). Have you no gratitude for that young man who prays for you, teaches your children, and preaches God's gospel?

I have been a preacher for over 35 years. I know all of the expenses of such a work—cars, tires, gasoline, repairs, books, shirts, shoes, suits, meals, family needs, and such. Even our pagan government does not require a man to go to war at his own expense. I am jealous for the welfare and comfort of my preacher brethren, especially the young ones.

Give them a generous gift, buy them a suit, a shirt, some tires for their cars. Share your garden, your freezer, speak an encouraging word to them. Treat them like servants of the Most High God ought to be treated!

“Inasmuch,” Christ said, “as ye have done it to the least of these, my brethren, *ye have done it to me!*”

Work as if Both Everything and Nothing Depended on You

The believer throws himself fully into the Father's business while, at the same time, he falls back on the promise “it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.” When I preach, I must study, prepare, and approach the pulpit as though what men hear, learn, and believe depended on my making the message plain and true to the Scriptures; yet, I know that my success depends entirely on God, as if I were not even there!

The same view should be taken by you in your witness, work, giving, and labor in the church. Men may plow, plant, and water; but nothing will come of it if God does not give the increase.

He Laid Down His Life For Us

Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.

1 John 3:16

Here is the most profound, sublime, and glorious truth that human tongue can speak, proclaimed in seven simple, one-syllable words. There is not a long, complicated word in the entire sentence!

Great thoughts can always be expressed in simple words, such as “Thank you,” or “I love you.” But *feeble thoughts* need to be dressed up in rhetoric and fine language. Someone said, “Today’s intellectuals need Latin words and confusing sentences to express their feeble ideas, but God’s servants are always content to preach the gospel in the Spirit and *with the understanding!*”

We do not preach for admiration but for edification. We do not preach to impress men but to instruct them.

The Antidote to Pride

When we feel justified and accepted in Christ, we also feel ourselves to be sinful beggars. Yes! The *more* we see of his grace, the *less* we feel ourselves to be. As he increases, we decrease.

The big letter “I” is so large with human nature; pride is such a part of us that it remains with us to the grave. But if there is anything that can kill pride, it is a better view of his grace to us in Christ. “O, to grace how great a debtor daily I’m constrained to be.” O where would

I be? What would I be? What would be my eternal lot without my dear Redeemer?

When We See His Glory

When we see his glory, like Isaiah, we will speak in *humility*, “Woe is me.” We will speak of our sins, “I am a man of unclean lips.” We will speak in obedience, “Here am I, Lord, send me.” We will make known the gospel of his glory, “He was wounded for our transgressions.”

Married to Christ

There are two things that every believer wants above all else.

1. He wants deliverance from the guilt and curse of sin—to live to God in Christ.

2. He wants deliverance from the power and practice of sin—to walk in the Spirit.

A saving interest in, and a living union with Christ accomplishes both. Our Lord Jesus has forever freed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us, and from the guilt of sin, through his obedience and sacrifice. “There is therefore now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus.” “Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth.” In Christ we have honored the law and satisfied God’s justice; we are complete and perfect in him!

Also, those believers who are *in Christ* by grace, by the power of the Spirit, and by faith, walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit; and they do mind the things of Christ. That is, they do love the commandments, doctrines, and all things pertaining to the kingdom of their Lord. They are concerned with his glory, and their thoughts are

occupied with their relationship with Christ. Their affection is set on things above, not on the things of this world.

It is a matter of being in love with, and married to, another (Rom. 7:1-6). “We are become dead to the law by the body of Christ that we should be married to Christ and bring forth fruit unto God.” We are dead to the old husband who restrained us and held us captive. We are married to Christ and serve him, not under obedience to written rules and regulations, but in *newness of life and love!*

The forced obedience of a man under law is the obedience of a slave. The obedience of a son or a wife is the obedience of love (2 Cor. 5:14).

Receive Him

The most effective medicine will not heal unless it is taken; the finest coat will not warm the body unless it is put on; the wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption secured by Christ will profit you nothing unless he is received with a believing heart. “As many as *received* him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name.”

I urge you to *look* to Christ for every spiritual blessing; and, looking to him as just and justifier, to *believe* on him; and, believing on him as able to do all that he says, to *receive* him!

“ I c a n b u t p e r i s h i f I g o ;\|
I a m r e s o l v e d t o t r y ;\|
But if I stay away, I know\|must forever die.”

The God of Jacob

Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the Lord his God.

Psalm 146:5

Who is this God of Jacob? He is the God who chose Jacob! “Jacob have I loved” (Rom. 9:10-13). He is the God who revealed himself to Jacob at Bethel! “I am the Lord God...I am with thee and will keep thee until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of” (Gen. 28:12-22). He is the God who gave Jacob a new name! “Thy name shall be called no more Jacob (a supplanter) but Israel (a prince of God)” (Gen. 32:24-28).

“Happy the man whose hopes rely
on Israel’s God: he made the sky,
and earth, and seas, with all their train:
his truth for ever stands secure;
He saves the oppressed, he feeds the poor,
and none shall find his promise vain.”

Unto Him

Let us go unto him without the camp.

Hebrews 13:13

The key words in this verse are *unto him*. It is possible to go without the camp and be no better off than we were before. We can leave organized religion, we can shun the ceremonies, we can separate ourselves from the world, we can become sanctimonious hermits and still be in the gall of bitterness unless we go *unto him*. Christ is our sin-offering, our sanctification, and our hope of redemption. Where he is, there we must be. Whether in the camp or without the camp, let us go forth therefore *unto him*.

In his shame and reproach, he suffered without the camp. In order to sanctify us with his blood and to fulfill the type of himself in Leviticus 16:15-17, Christ was crucified outside the walls of Jerusalem. So, being one with him, we leave the camp of ceremonialism, legalism, human works, worldliness, or whatever to walk with our Lord. Whatever shame or reproach we incur from the natural or the religious world is welcomed if it is because of our union with Christ. We find our joy and happiness in him.

The world and everything in it are unstable and temporary. The riches, honor, pleasures, and people of this world and the fashion of it pass away. Though we are in this world, we are not of it. When the will of God is done, we shall be taken out of this world to heaven where all is peace and perfect love!

The Sum and Substance of the Gospel

Christ died for the ungodly.

Romans 5:6

This is the sum and substance of our gospel and is the great article of our faith.

Who died? Christ—the only begotten, well-beloved Son of God in human flesh.

How did he die? A death of shame under the wrath of God, bearing our sins.

Why did he die? He died for, in the stead of, and as the substitute for all of God's elect in order that God might be just and the justifier of those who believe in him.

For whom did he die? “For the ungodly”—not for righteous men, but for those who are ungodly in nature and practice.

When did he die? When we were without strength to obey him or to keep his law and without ability to help ourselves. He died “in due time,” at the time appointed by the Father.

What good news!

Count the Cost

We are living in the day of “instant religion.” The conviction is gone, the struggle is gone, counting the cost of discipleship is a thing of the past. Men make a profession today and are teachers tomorrow.

It is far easier and quicker to shake a preacher’s hand than to cling as a beggar to the hand of the Redeemer. It is easier and quicker to walk an aisle than to seek the Lord. It is easier to eat a wafer than to feed on the Living Bread. It is more convenient to receive water on the brow or be plunged beneath the water than to drink continually at the Fountain of Life.

It may sound like I am discouraging, rather than encouraging, men to confess Christ. Not so! I am discouraging you from making a hurried, careless, half-hearted profession of religion that will leave you in a false refuge without God and without hope.

The Mercies of God

If the “sons of Jacob” will study the mercies of the God of Bethel, they will discover that his mercies are indeed *early* mercies, *unsought* mercies, *unmerited* mercies, *unchanging* mercies, and *priceless* mercies.

Begin and End in Christ

Every day I find it most healthy to my soul to try to walk as a saint; but, in order to do so, I must continually come to Christ as a sinner. I would seek to be perfect; I would strain after every virtue and forsake every false way; but still, as to my standing before God, I find it happiest to sit where I sat when I first looked to Jesus—on the Rock of his person and work, having nothing to do with my own righteousness, but *only with His*.

Depend on it, my dear friends, the only way of living as a believer is to live as a poor sinner and as nothing at all, having *Jesus Christ as all in all!* You may have all your growth in sanctification, all your progress in graces, all the development of your virtues that you will; but I earnestly pray you will never put any of these where Christ must be. If you have begun in Christ, then *finish in Christ*.

If you have begun in the flesh and then go on in the flesh, we know what the sure results will be. But, if you have begun with *Jesus Christ* as your Alpha, let him be your Omega. I pray you never think that you are rising when you get above this; for it is not rising when anything is added to Christ, but slipping downwards to your ruin. Stand still to this:

“Nothing in my hands I bring;
Simply to thy cross I cling.”

Betrayed With a Kiss

Judas betrayed his Master with *a kiss!* He came to the Lord with evil in his heart, the price of a compromise in his hand, religious devils at his side, and said, “Hail Master,” as he planted *a kiss* on the Lord’s cheek!

This is how most apostates and compromisers operate; they betray the Son of God and the gospel of grace *with a kiss*. They talk of love, humility, morality, and sugar and spice while they sell out to the religious world and betray the sovereign Son of God. And men watch

their pretended affection and hear their words, “Hail, Master,” spoken so softly, smoothly, humbly, and sweetly, and they say, “Can such devout people be *enemies* of the Lord?”

Do not be deceived; sometimes the most devout looking, religious people can be the most hypocritical in the world. Do not be deceived by their kisses. *listen to their gospel!* Peter, bearing the sword, had more grace than Judas, who came with a kiss.

Tell It One More Time

Our Lord was made flesh and dwelt among men on this earth for over thirty years in full and perfect obedience to the law of God. “By the obedience of *one* shall the many be made righteous.” He then took upon himself all of our sins. He was arrested, not only by men, but by the hand of divine justice, as if he had been the greatest sinner. “He was numbered with the transgressors” and given over to wicked men who scourged him, crowned him with thorns, spit upon him, and condemned him to be crucified. He died on the cruel tree, not for any sins of his own (for he had none), but “He was made a curse for us that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.” “He died, the Just for the unjust that he might bring us to God.” Our Lord was buried and has risen from the dead, leaving our sin in the grave, and has ascended to the right hand of the Majesty on High to intercede and prepare a place for all who believe in him. This is good news to the guilty, for our Lord “came to seek and to save the lost.”

“Firm as His throne the gospel stands,
My Lord, my hope, my trust;
If I am found in Jesus’ hands,
My soul can never be lost.”

Let the guilty sinner, who would be saved from all his sins, believe God and trust God as he is revealed in and through the Lord Jesus Christ; for, with him, there is plenteous redemption, and sin is no longer imputed to those who are *in Christ by faith* (Rom. 4:7-8).

God's Ways Are Not Our Ways

I thought to prepare myself for great things only to learn that it was the rough voice in the wilderness he planned to use and not the polished preacher; it was the weak, impulsive shepherd with the sling that he planned to use and not the mighty warrior with his armor of wit and arsenal of facts, doctrines, and learning.

If we don't pour contempt on ourselves, *God will!*

Three Wonders in Heaven

Do you remember John Newton's story of "The Three Wonders in Heaven?" The first wonder was that he would see so many there he did not expect to see there. The second was that he would miss so many he did expect to see there. But the third wonder would be the greatest wonder of them all—to find himself there.

When I hear myself and others censuring and condemning other believers because they are not like us, or are not perfect, I would remind myself and all that hear me that we are all saved by grace alone, and we have nothing that we did not receive.

I do not have any time for freewill Arminianism and a compromise of the gospel of Christ; but where we find those who love Christ Jesus and preach (however imperfectly) his grace, let us love, encourage, and pray for them.

If there is anything that will cure a critical, envious spirit, it is to have the grace we preach and profess become a *heart experience*.

No Better Gospel

Mr. Spurgeon once said, "I know that however many may preach the gospel better than I do, there is no one who can preach a better

gospel than the one I preach; for I preach the gospel of God's free and sovereign grace in Christ Jesus."

How true! Our gospel is the "power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth." Our gospel gives all the glory to God, for "salvation is of the Lord." Our gospel is true to the Scriptures, fulfilling every promise, pattern, and type. Our gospel enables God to be just and the justifier of sinners. Our gospel can save "the chief of sinners." And our gospel will not lose one sheep given to Christ, called to Christ, and resting in Christ by faith.

What a rich and glorious gospel is our gospel!

A Worldwide Ministry

I am thankful to our gracious Lord for his continued mercies to, and blessings upon, this assembly of believers. I am grateful to all of you for your faith and generous support of the Lord's ministry here.

The Lord has actually given us a *worldwide ministry* through the missionaries, tapes, television, and books. Our commentaries are now in thirty English speaking countries and are being translated into Portuguese, French, and Spanish. My preaching engagements and the open doors for our preacher brethren, whom the Lord has gifted in this place, enable us to assist and encourage other churches and pastors. This ministry also receives support from many television listeners, bulletin readers, and friends of the tape ministry.

To all, I express my sincere appreciation and encourage you to continue your prayerful and faithful assistance. I realize that I am too busy and on the road entirely too much to give personal attention to this congregation and the local services; but, in order to do that, we would have to refuse to minister where God obviously opens a door. This congregation, though, is mature, established in the Word, and God has raised up faithful men and women to minister to one another while the pastor shares the gospel of God's grace and his experience with God's sheep in other places.

We are doing what Paul exhorted Timothy to do when he wrote, “Do the work of an evangelist...” “Preach the Word in season and out of season.” Let us not ask for *less* to do and fewer responsibilities, but let us thank God for every open door and every opportunity to preach his Son, and let us pray that he will allow us to be the means to bring his dear ones to a knowledge of Christ.

“And I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, ‘Whom shall I send and who will go for us?’ Then I said, ‘Here am I; send me!’” (Is. 6:8).

Eternally Beloved of the Lord

The Apostle Paul wrote, “We are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren, beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation.” If you are beloved of the Lord, you always were beloved of the Lord. He did not begin to love you when you repented of sin and believed on Christ. God saw you in Christ in his eternal covenant and loved you then. That love for those beloved of the Lord was shown two thousand years ago when it pleased him to bruise his Son for you.

Christ redeemed you not only before you were aware of his grace, but before you were born. There was nothing in you to merit his eternal, infinite, and unchangeable love. On the contrary, you were his enemies, profaned his name, and even despised his mercy after you heard about it.

“*Herein is love*, not that we loved God, but that he loved us and gave his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.”

Psalm 23

Some believers are troubled because they cannot always and at all times feel the joy and comfort set forth in Psalm 23. We should remember that, though David lived long and wrote much, he wrote only one 23rd Psalm. There are other psalms; psalms of conviction,

praise, prayer, seeking, and mourning. In fact, even this Psalm closes with our walk through the valley of death.

This *valley of death* is our entire journey through life. The fall of Adam put the stamp of death on everything and everyone. But we are walking through. It is not our home, and it is a valley of the *shadow* of death.

Christ has removed the substance and sting of death for us. The shadow of a dog can't hurt; the shadow of a gun can't kill. "I will fear no evil." He does not say there will be *no* evil; but, because he is with me, I don't *fear* the evil.

Emmanuel

The mystery, power, and glory of the gospel is that "God was manifest in the flesh." All the divine attributes are displayed in the Lord Jesus Christ—Emmanuel—*God with us!* Take Christ from the gospel and you have no gospel. Take Jesus Christ and him divine, incarnate, crucified, risen, and enthroned out of your preaching and you have no message and no ministry.

Whatever else you major on or whatever good work you accomplish, it is all wood, hay, and stubble if the Lord Jesus is not your central theme. If he be lifted up, he will draw men unto him; and he *must* be lifted up or else the preaching is like the rattling of dry bones.

"'Tis not that I did choose thee, \\
For Lord, that could not be;
This heart would still refuse thee,
Hadst thou not chosen me."

The Justice of God

The *justice of God* is in itself a great barrier to the salvation of a sinner. Because God is just, our sins must be punished. Never has there been a sin pardoned without atonement since the world began. There has never been a sin remitted by the great judge of heaven until justice has been fully satisfied.

How, then, can a sinner be saved? This is the great riddle of the law and the grand discovery of the gospel. The answer is, God's justice has been fully satisfied through the substitution of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

He died "the just for the unjust" that he might bring us to God. Through the obedience and death of our Lord on our behalf, God can be just and justify the believer.

Free Agents But Not Free Wills

All men are *free agents* with the power to choose, act, and decide according to their character and nature! But, to say that man has a *free will* is to say that he has the power to act contrary to his own nature.

Our sinful natures have destroyed our will to do good and brought our wills into bondage and captivity to sin. Man's will is bound to, and determined by, his sinful nature. He has a will, but it is *not free*. It is the servant of sin. Only God in Christ can give a man the will to obey him. "Thy people shall be made willing in the day of *thy power*" (Ps. 110:3).

The Miseries of the Rich

Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you. Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are motheaten. Your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days. Behold, the hire of the labourers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth: and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of sabaoth. Ye have lived in pleasure on the earth, and been wanton; ye have nourished your hearts, as in a day of slaughter. Ye have condemned and killed the just; and he doth not resist you.

James 5:1-6

All prosperous people are *not* addressed here. There are some affluent people who truly love Christ, love others, and make good use of their material blessings for the glory of God, the preaching of the gospel, and the relief of human suffering.

The Apostle is writing to prosperous people who profess religion, assemble with the church, and are not rich toward God. They use most of what they have for their own pleasure, comfort, and whims. They lavish in material luxury, lay back treasures, and close their ears to the needs of God's family. To them James says, "Weep for the miseries that shall come upon you."

Let us all learn to be good stewards of grace in whatever form grace is given to us.

Committed to Christ

Am I truly committed to Christ? Anything less than total commitment can hardly be called salvation! "You believe that there is

one God [and there's much that this implies] you do well: the devils also believe [what you believe] and tremble.”

I verily believe that there are a host of “part-time Christians,” “doctrinalists,” and “Calvinists” who have yet to learn the meaning of discipleship—commitment and a union with the Lord Jesus, which makes us all that we are and have, *his!*

“To win Christ and be found in him” is more than believing some facts and holding to the doctrines of grace, disagreeing with today’s preachers, and listening to sermon tapes by grace preachers.

Four Fundamentals of Faith

1. *A need*—Men and women come to Christ because they need Christ! *The well have no need...* (Matt. 9:11-13).

2. *The Word*—Faith’s one foundation is the Word of God. We have no reason to believe anything except what God hath said. “Faith cometh by hearing the Word” (Rom. 10:17).

3. *Christ*—The sole object of saving faith is Christ, our Lord. He, of God, is made unto us all things that we need. We believe, look, trust, and rest in him (Col. 2:9-10).

4. *Grace*—Both the will to believe and the power to believe are the gifts of God, “not of works” (Eph. 2:8-9).

The Lord Will Deliver Them That Are His

I do not panic nor despair in this world of religious paganism and corruption. The Lord knows how to deliver them that love him and worship him out of all trial and tribulation. Evil may abound, false teachers increase, and the true worship of the Lord may all but perish

from the earth; but our God has a people who are chosen by him, redeemed by his dear Son, and called by his Spirit.

He will keep them from falling, and he will keep them till the river rolls its waters at their feet. Then he will safely bear them over.

The Preaching of the Word

The preaching of the Word of God by chosen servants of God is the ordained means for the conversion of his elect (1 Cor. 1:17-21). *Not* that the Word *read* is not effectual; it certainly is. But the promise is especially concerning the *Word preached and heard* (Rom. 10:17; Jn. 5:24).

This alone stresses the importance of a regular and faithful attendance where the gospel is preached. It ought also to burden the heart of the preacher to be serious and sincere before God in preaching the *gospel of Christ*.

Thoughts on Love

Someone once said, “The days grow shorter, the nights grow longer, the gravestones are thicker along the way; the life grows sadder, but love grows stronger for those who walk with Christ day by day.”

Another poet wrote, “Love covers a multitude of sins. It is like the painter who was hired to paint the picture of a friend who had a crooked eye. He painted the other side of his face.”

Longfellow wrote, “True love gives itself; it can never be bought at any price.”

“True love looks through a telescope; jealousy and envy, through a microscope.” -Henry Shaw

“Love that has nothing but beauty, gifts, and service to keep it in good health will soon drop dead.” -Erasmus

“Too often our first love and our last love is self-love. Our Lord exhorts us to love others as we love ourselves, and to love God more.”

“We never know how much a person loves until we know how much he is willing to suffer and endure for the object of his love. Our Lord declared that it is the giving element that measures love. ‘For God so loved that he gave.’ ‘Greater love hath no man than this, that he laid down his life.’ In other words, the happiness of one who loves depends on the happiness and well-being of the one he loves.”

Love is the greatest gift that God can give to us, for *himself* is love; and it is the greatest thing we can give to others. The Apostle calls it the bond of perfectness. It is the old, the new, the great commandment, and all the commandments; for it is the fulfilling of the law.

Love produces all the other graces with no motivation but itself.

The Preaching That Honors Christ is the Preaching of Christ Himself

He [the Holy Spirit] shall glorify ME; for he shall receive of mine and show it unto you.

John 16:14

The Holy Spirit does not reach after something novel, new, or spectacular in order to glorify Christ or to preach Christ to men. He does not need tongues, fleshly emotion, bodily healings, and creature fame and importance in order to bring glory to Christ and call out his sheep. He finds Christ’s glory in *Christ himself!* If we want to honor Christ, glorify Christ, and preach Christ, we must not look for something outside of Christ; but we must honor him by preaching that which is his already—his deity, his person, his manhood, his life, his death, his resurrection, his ascension, his intercession, and his return!

Strange as it may seem, there is today very little preaching of *Christ himself*. Men preach about those who knew him, who served him, and who wrote of him. They preach his church, his doctrines, and his commandments. They preach series of messages on those who used to preach Christ, on the conduct and conversation of those who profess to know Christ, and on the duties and responsibilities of believers in Christ, but very few messages on the person and work of Christ himself. They read papers and conduct discussions on ways to organize the kingdom of Christ, and how to honor Christ; and they seldom get around to doing that which God has ordained and commissioned us to do and that is *to preach Christ!*

Jesus Christ is most glorified, his sheep most edified, his will and purpose accomplished, and his church perfected in faith, hope, and love when we preach *Christ himself*. The work of the Spirit of God is to reveal to us the beauties of Jesus Christ, and they are all found in Christ himself.

All of God and All of Grace

Thank God salvation is of the Lord; and whom he foreknew, he predestinated to be conformed to the image of his Son, and whom he predestinated he called, justified, and glorified. This is salvation—of God and all of grace through the merits of Christ—a work *purposed*, a work *started*, a work *continued*, and a work *completed*.

The wise man wrote in Ecclesiastes 3:14, “I know that whatsoever God doeth it shall be forever. Nothing can be put to it nor anything taken from it, and God doeth it that men should fear him.”

Learning our Littleness

Samson boasted, “With the jawbone of an ass I have slain a thousand men” (Jud. 15:15-18). Then he thought that he would die for

want of a drink of water. The mighty man whom God used so greatly is helpless for *lack of a little water!*

God has ways of teaching us our littleness, our nothingness, and our dependence on him. We forget the crown on our heads when we have a splinter in our finger. God is reconciled to us in Christ and loves us, but we are depressed because some earthly fool is out of sorts with us.

“O to grace how great a debtor
Daily I’m constrained to be!”

What Can I Do?

Recently I quoted Paul’s cry, “Lord, what would you have me to do?” A brother said to me, “I ask the Lord that same question, for I certainly want to serve him and do his will; but what can I do? What is there to do?” My reply is:

1. Doing the will and work of God is not always a physical or a material effort. They asked our Lord in John 6:28, “What shall we do that we might work the works of God?” Jesus answered, “This is the work of God that ye *believe* on him whom he hath sent.” Genuine, sincere faith in Christ is doing the will of God (Heb. 11:6).

2. Faithfulness to the gospel, to the Lord’s church, to the Lord’s people, and to our families is doing the will and work of God. “Moreover, it is required in stewards that a man be found *faithful*” (1 Cor. 4:2). Much can be said for the man or woman who fills his or her place regularly and faithfully and can be counted on in every situation to stand and, having done all, to *stand!*

3. Dependable, enduring love for one another is fulfilling the commandments of our Lord. “This is my commandment, that ye love one another as I have loved you.” Is not the whole law of God fulfilled in loving God and loving one another? There is nothing individuals need, churches need, or the kingdom of God requires more than genuine, faithful *love* which “beareth all things, believeth

all things, hopeth all things, and endureth all things.” I may *do* many things according to 1 Corinthians 13:1-3; but, if I have not love, it profiteth me nothing.

We Find All We Need in Christ

“We do not find rest, hope, nor comfort in our faith but in Christ.” If you will give careful thought to that statement, it will be of great help to you. Faith is not a foundation, a refuge, nor a source of help. Faith is the means; a look, an empty hand. It is Christ who is our refuge and who protects from every storm. He is our rock on which we build. He is our source for every mercy and our only plea.

My faith may be weak or weaker, but he cannot fail. If all my debts have been paid by my surety, I don’t have to be ashamed to come before God. The praise and credit goes not to my boldness and faith but to my gracious benefactor! I am not debt-free because I believe (though I do, and that faith united me to him) but because he *set me free and paid my debt*.

Christ is our confidence and our assurance. The moment I seek a reason for hope in anything I do, even in the blessed grace of faith, I forfeit any possibility of peace. “Blessed is that man that maketh the Lord his trust” (Ps. 40:4). “When Isaiah saw his glory, he spake of him” (Jn. 12:41).

When any man truly sees the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ, then Christ becomes the message and the object of faith.

Ministers

The reason Christ gave us ministers of the gospel is for “the perfecting of” all believers (Eph. 4:12), for even the best of believers are imperfect. Our faith, love, knowledge, and obedience all need growth and maturity.

He gave ministers for “the work of the ministry,” to preach the gospel to the lost, to oversee the church, and to teach the things of Christ.

He gave ministers for “the edifying of the body of Christ.” We preach and teach to strengthen, build up, comfort, and give assurance to the people of God.

We preach and teach until all the elect come to saving faith and are united in their sentiments concerning Christ Jesus, the source and object of faith. We preach until all the elect come to a spiritual knowledge of Christ, behold his glory, and trust in him. We are ambassadors of Christ on the trail of his sheep with the good news of deliverance.

Spiritual Life

I can’t explain spiritual life except to say, “Cut into the new heart, and you’ll find love for Christ; cut into the renewed mind, and you’ll find thoughts of Christ; cut into the broken will, and you’ll find the will of Christ.”

Cast All Your Care Upon Him

The apostle wrote, “casting all your care upon him for he careth for you.” We know these trials are for our good and his glory. We know he does care and that we should cast them upon him and *leave them there*, coming away rejoicing in the Lord.

But, too often, we don’t act in heart upon what we know in our heads. I exhort you to do what the hymn-writer said,

“Take your burdens to the Lord
And leave them there.”

Commit Thy Way Unto The Lord

Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him; and He shall bring it to pass.

Psalm 37:5

Some of you are having great trouble and are walking a rough way. It may seem to you right now that these sorrows are more than you can bear. Indeed, they *are* more than you can bear; but you do not have to bear them alone. David said, “Commit thy way unto the Lord,” and Peter wrote, “Casting all your care upon him, for he careth for you.”

You have committed your soul to him; then you can surely trust him with your home, children, and business. These things are far inferior to your immortal soul. He has promised us troubles in this world, but not without his *sufficient grace* to carry us through them.

Someone said, “There is no need for *two* to carry the burden when *one* of the two is the Lord of glory.” Joy cometh in the morning, just you wait and see. Romans 8:28.

Care Not for the Things of This World

Let us beware of the notion that there is anything less than honorable about being poor or working with our hands. Moses was tending sheep when God called him; Gideon was thrashing wheat; Elisha was plowing; the disciples were fishing for a living! Paul was content to make tents even after he was put into the ministry.

I find that the less care and concern men and women have for the material things of this world, the more time and interest they have for and in all spiritual matters.

Perfect in Him

There is nothing that will make a *needy sinner* look to Christ alone or a *believer* cling to, and rest in, Christ alone more than to realize that everything God is, everything that God requires, and everything that a sinner needs or will ever need is *in Jesus Christ*. We are perfect in him!

He is perfect, and our being in him makes us perfect (Col. 2:9-10). This is not speaking of what we shall be, but what we are right now in Christ before God.

The Spirit Gives Life to the Message

God's preachers do not go forth alone into the world to persuade sinners to believe, love, and come to Christ by their own logic, rhetoric, and power of persuasion. The Holy Spirit goes before them and with them to quicken, awaken, and give sinners eyes to see the beauties of Christ, ears to hear him, and hearts to understand the gospel of grace, and love the Redeemer (Ps. 110:3).

The bride has been chosen (2 Thess. 2:13), the servant will endure all things (2 Tim. 2:9-10), the bride will hear the voice of her beloved through the message of the servant (Jn. 10:23-30), and the bride will come (Jn. 6:37-40).

The Offering of Himself

What did Christ offer to God? He made a sacrifice of *himself*. It is true that he sacrificed his rest, his honor, his reputation, and his life; but the essence of his sacrifice was *himself*. "He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself" (Heb. 9:26). "He his own self bore our sins in his body on the tree."

By himself he honored the law and enabled the Lawgiver to be just and merciful.

Believers Need no Signs

Wherefore, tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that BELIEVE NOT; but prophesying serveth not for them that believe not, but for them that BELIEVE.

1 Corinthians 14:22

The power of the apostles and other early preachers to speak supernaturally in other languages is *not* a sign for believers (who need no miracle, either to gain their attention, or to confirm their faith); but these gifts and miracles bore witness before unbelievers that these men were sent from God and preached a message from heaven (Heb. 2:3-4; Jn. 3:2).

Inspired preaching and teaching, which interprets the divine will and purpose of God in Christ, serves to edify believers, not unbelievers, who must first be regenerated and given ears to hear.

Live in an Attitude of Thanksgiving and Prayer

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

The Apostle Paul says, “Rejoice evermore, pray without ceasing and give thanks to God in all things” (1 Thess. 5:16-18). This is the will of God; that we rejoice always, pray continually, and give thanks. What we are, what we have, where we are, and all that happens in the life of a believer are all according to the will of God for us.

Let us rejoice in prosperity or adversity, and live in an attitude of thanksgiving and prayer, even when we have no particular request. Very ungrateful is the man who does not set so high a value on the love of God, the righteousness of Christ, and the hope of eternal life that he allows anything in this life to overshadow that wonderful gift of grace.

How can I murmur and complain when I am a child of the King of kings?

The Thread of Grace

Like a golden thread, the grace of God runs through the believer's whole history, from his election in eternity past to the day he will stand before God, perfectly conformed to the image of our Lord Jesus. There is no point in the existence or experience of a redeemed person where he does not say in sincerity, "I am what I am by the grace of God."

Our election, our call, and our justification are by *grace*. Our strength in trial is his *grace*. Our prayers ascend to the throne of *grace*. We grow in *grace*, and we are stewards of the *grace* of God.

His Truth Marches On

It is to the honor of our Lord Jesus Christ that his cause and his gospel survive all the sins and follies of his people. Bro. Muse once said, "One of the proofs that the gospel is true is the fact that through the ages it has continued in spite of such poor preaching." Spurgeon wrote, "Taking ministers all round, I find them more likely to destroy than to build up the cause of Christ."

The Master's kingdom has survived the blunders of his disciples; his wisdom stands in spite of our folly; his power is not lessened by our weakness; and the glory of his righteousness has not been clouded by our unrighteousness.

The King of kings still conquers, using such poor followers and soldiers.

Acceptance With God

For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the Just for the unjust, that He might BRING US TO GOD.

1 Peter 3:18

How can I, a sinner, come to the holy, living God and find welcome, acceptance, and fellowship? How can I come to God so as to live my life here on earth in his communion and favor and, when I die, be received up to enjoy his glory forever? I can take the Scriptures and eliminate the many ways which men think will bring them to God.

1. The *love of God* alone will not bring me to God. God is love and delights to show mercy, but God is also holy and righteous and will not show his love at the expense of his holiness. He will punish sin!

2. The *law of God* will not bring me to God. "By the law is the knowledge of sin," not its pardon nor forgiveness.

3. The *church of God* will not bring me to God. The church is the body of those who have been brought to God.

In the Old Testament there were three essentials to coming to God to obtain favor, acceptance, and atonement. On the Day of Atonement the *high priest* came to the *tabernacle* with the *blood sacrifice* in his hand. There was a designated priest who came to the tabernacle (holy place) with the atoning blood. It is no different today!

Our tabernacle is Christ, who tabernacled among us. God will meet men and men will meet God only in Christ.

Our high priest is the lord Jesus, who is the one Mediator.

Our atonement is his own blood, by which he entered heaven itself and obtained for us full, complete, and eternal acceptance.

I urge you who have an interest in knowing the Living God to come to him by faith in Christ.

Bulletin Articles of Henry Mahan For the Year 1987

Submit

*God resisteth the proud but giveth grace to the humble.
Submit yourself, therefore, to God.*

James 4:6-7

The way to overcome pride, envy, and the spirit of carnal ambition is to submit yourselves to God! Submit to his will and purpose regarding gifts, talents, and possessions; to his place of service, be it lowly or great; to his will to prosper or empty us, to honor or humiliate us.

There is *one name* to be praised, *one will* to be done, *one life* to be imitated, *one person* who must have the preeminence—our *Lord Jesus Christ!*

Let Demas be a Warning

I believe I know a little of the grief that Paul felt when he wrote, “Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this *present world*.” I don’t know very much about Demas, but I do know that Paul believed that Demas loved Christ, loved the gospel, and would continue in the faith until God called him home. But Demas allowed someone—or something—to come between him and the Lord, revealing that what he had professed for so long was *only* a profession!

Perhaps Demas had a common, ordinary job and was promoted to a position of authority, which made his association with the despised gospel and apostles embarrassing to him. Or perhaps Demas was a widower who met a certain unbelieving, attractive woman who turned his foolish head from the church and the gospel. Or perhaps Demas came into a great inheritance and his new lifestyle did not fit the humble lifestyle of the apostles. Or perhaps Demas was a young, handsome man who despised the single life and was determined to marry *his choice* over the protest of the Apostle Paul. Or perhaps Demas was an ambitious preacher who felt that toning down the offensive message of free-grace in seeking the approval of Arminian will-worshippers and the fellowship of religionists, would open doors for him, increase his congregation, and add to his support. Or perhaps Demas had just never stopped loving Demas, and his claims to Christ were only a part of his effort to promote himself.

Whatever it may have been, the Demas tribe continues with us!

His Will

To receive Christ as our Lord is to bow to *his will*. To walk with Christ is to walk with him “who worketh all things after the counsel of *his own will*.” To plan my day is to say, “If the *Lord will*, we shall do this.” To pray is to “ask anything according to *his will*.”

The Generosity of His People

I never ceased to be amazed at, and thankful for, the way the Lord continues to supply the needs of this ministry through his generous people. The sheep of Christ want the Word preached in a plain, straight-forward manner which gives God the glory and shuts us up to his sovereign mercy in Christ.

This glorious Redeemer they love, his gospel they delight in, and his true messengers they will support, without pressure or coercion. God’s people do not respond to offers of reward, for Christ alone is

their reward, and they are not intimidated by threats, for “there is therefore now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus.”

The Full Sum of our Preaching

The Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified.

1 Corinthians 1:22-23

Times have changed but men have not. Most religionists still seek signs, tongues, feelings, and experiences. The other camp of religionists still seek wisdom, intellectualism, and philosophy. But God’s preachers *preach Christ*.

They know Christ, love Christ, and desire that others know him. Such a vast, infinite, and heavenly gospel can never be exhausted. So, we preach Christ today and tomorrow, as our first and last message, and as the full sum of our theology.

What is Saving Faith?

What is saving faith? Over and over again Paul asserts that faith is “believing God.” Abraham believed that God was able to perform all that *he had promised*. Abraham believed God! Faith is simply believing God and thus believing *God’s Word!* “Thy word is truth.”

What God says about himself, about our guilt, about his purpose of grace in Christ, about Christ’s person and work, is true. We agree with his Word, rely upon it, and act accordingly. This is faith!

Paul summed up the matter of faith when he stood upon the deck of that doomed ship and declared, “Sirs, be of good cheer; for *I believe God*, that it shall be even as it was told me.” Paul believed God and thus believed his word.

The Only Way

How can a sinner approach God? How can a son of Adam come before God, be accepted and be forgiven? Only in the way which God has decreed—*no other way!*

This is not being too narrow nor radical, for the Scriptures declare this truth over and over. “There is none other name...” “Other foundation can no man lay...” “No man cometh to the Father but by me.” “He that believeth not shall be damned.”

Instead of insisting on another way, let us rejoice in his underserved mercy which provided *the way!* God has, in grace and mercy, purposed to show mercy to sinners in the only way consistent with his justice, truth, and love—the obedience and sacrifice of his only begotten Son (Rom. 3:19-26).

Pray for Neither Poverty nor Plenty

Give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food of my allowance; lest I be full and deny thee, and say, who is the Lord? Or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain.

Proverbs 30:8-9

Most of us have never known what it means to be in poverty and want, but have lived in reasonable comfort all our lives. If I or my children were hungry, cold, and forced to live in a one-room shack, I might put forth my hand and steal or even curse the providence of God. On the other hand, I have seen what money, fame, and power can do to a proud human heart. I’m not sure that I could deal with the temptation of a full purse.

My prayer, then, is like the above prayer of Agur, “Give me neither poverty nor riches, feed me with what I really need and in your wise providence is best for me.” I do not know which holds the

greater temptation, poverty or plenty. I do know what's best for all of us—to have neither!

“Be content with what you have and avoid covetousness, which is idolatry.”

Contending for the Truth

Contending for the truth against the errors of modern religion is the duty of God's servants. I hope our spirit is one of genuine love to all the chosen of God; but, today's rule of charity, which requires us to keep silent on certain points in order to avoid controversy, I utterly despise.

It is treason to the Lord Jesus to be silent on any point where he has spoken and the honor of his gospel is concerned. It is easy on the flesh to deal in generalities, to denounce hyper-this or hyper-that, and to claim to be a friend to all. But, it is required of the loyal servant of King Jesus to maintain his crown-rights and to stand up for his gospel of glory and grace.

A Believer's Peace

Where does a believer find real and genuine peace? On what foundation can we rest and say in truth, “It is well with my soul?” I'll tell you; it lies in this—that we are justified by faith and not by works. Christ Jesus stood in my stead before God. I was guilty with nothing to pay, doomed to hell; and Christ took my place! He died for me! How can I perish? How can I be punished for sins which have already been laid on Christ and for which he has suffered?

God demands of me that I keep his holy law perfectly. I cannot do it. But Christ has kept it for me. He kept it, magnified it, made it honorable in my flesh. What more can God demand of me? I am washed in the blood of Christ Jesus; I am risen and seated at his right hand in Christ Jesus.

You may ask, “How is all this yours?” I reply, “By the grace of God, through the merits of Christ, revealed by the Spirit of God *through faith!*” God said, “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life.” I do believe, I sincerely believe in Christ; therefore, I have eternal life.

Beware of Giving Comfort Before its Time

It is one of the most unwise things under heaven to comfort people who have not yet closed with Christ in heart faith. When people manifest an interest in the gospel and give an ear to our message, we must not allow our love for them and our zeal for their conversion to lead us to offer them rest when they need strong words to shut them up to Christ.

Any friendship with the pastor and church people which gives an unbeliever cheer, fellowship, and ease short of a union with Christ is dangerous. A sinner’s main business is to come to *Christ himself*, to love Christ, to rest in Christ. Then comes church fellowship, rest, and the joy of the body.

There is no half-way house before believing in him!

Wisdom in Death

Lord, make me to know my end and the measure of my days that I may know how frail I am.

Psalm 39:4

When we, by God’s grace, are wise enough to face death, judgement, and eternity, things are seen in their proper light. All these

fine ideas of fame, fortune, and friends, and our so-called importance melts like frost in the sun.

Death reveals the truth, blows away the chaff, shuts a man's mouth, and opens the books! Death takes no notice of what I thought nor what others thought of me, but only of what *God thinks*. "Oh, that I may win Christ and be found in him."

Six Things Believers Will Do

1. Believers so trust Christ as to renounce every other ground of confidence (Philippians 3:8).
2. Believers glory only in the righteousness of Christ and count their own to be filthy rags (Isaiah 64:6).
3. Believers rejoice in the cross of substitution, glorying in nothing else (Galatians 6:14).
4. Believers love the Lord Jesus supremely and will so order their lives as to avoid commitments and associations which hinder fellowship with him (Luke 14:26-27).
5. Believers will continue in the faith, for true believers never quit (1 John 2:19).
6. Believers obey the Lord's commandments, not in order to gain his favor, but because they love him and dwell in his favor (2 Corinthians 5:14-15).

Adorn the Doctrine of God

Paul exhorts us to "adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour" (Titus 2:10). We cannot adorn it with choirs and cantatas, for God's music exceeds any we can produce. Listen to the birds sing, the wind whisper through the pines, the water rippling over the rocks.

We cannot adorn it with steeples and great temples. God's universe is his house. Stand out under the stars with the flowers at your feet and the soft, gentle breeze moving the trees. We can build nothing worthy of his glory.

We cannot adorn it with our religious uniforms. The perfect man stood in Eden clothed only in God's holiness. Our clothes only disguise our naked guilt. The gospel is best adorned when it is unadorned by our arguments and reasoning.

But we can adorn the doctrine of God with holiness of life, happiness of heart, love of sincere compassion, readiness to forgive, willingness to show mercy, and patience under trial. We can adorn it by an unselfish desire to make others happy, with a generous hand, and a peaceful disposition.

His Truth Marches On

A proof of the power and truthfulness of the gospel is in the fact that the Master's cause has survived such weak disciples. His wisdom has not been affected by our folly, his power has not been lessened by our weakness, his holiness has not suffered through our unholiness, and his grace shines in spite of our selfishness. Men who look to him are never disappointed.

The End is Greater than the Means

The ultimate end or goal of redemption is not the happiness, well-being, or even conversion of sinners, *but the glory of God* (Eph. 1:6,12,14). Man's comfort and safety is not the supreme goal of God's glorious gospel. The supreme goal of our gospel is the glory of God, the establishment of his rule and reign over a kingdom of peace and righteousness, the exaltation and manifestation of his character, and the preeminence of his beloved Son. Our salvation will serve that purpose (Phil. 2:6-11).

Everything in covenant mercies, in salvation, and in God's purpose for the sons of men (past, present, and future) turns upon the will of God in Christ. This makes *Christ the principal figure* in our gospel, our goals, and our glory. But, if you have salvation and God's purpose waiting upon the freewill of the creature, then *man* is the principal figure in your landscape and will lead you to compromise divine truth in order to win man's approval.

The attitude that we must get men converted at any cost and compromise, usually winds up costing the very character and truth of God, which is a price too high to pay. Conversions are never more important than truth. Truth is always more important than results. "Let God be true and every man a liar!"

All of Grace

"I am what I am by the grace of God." I am one of God's elect; my election is of grace. I am redeemed from the curse of the law; redemption is all of grace from beginning to end. I am kept and secure, but he keeps me by his grace.

If there is anything about me that is commendable or useful to God or men, it is not I, but Christ and his grace in me. I have joy within and comfort of soul regarding death, judgement, and eternity; but this hope is *all of grace!*

"Grace taught my soul to pray,
And made my eyes o'erflow;
'Twas grace that kept me to this day,
And will not let me go."⁵⁷

⁵⁷ Doddridge, Philip & Toplady, Augustus. *Grace 'tis a Charming Sound*. Hymns, &c, by J. Orton. London 1755.

We Have an Advocate

And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.

1 John 2:1

This scripture recognizes our frail, sinful, human nature. A believer does not love sin, does not excuse nor justify sin, but grieves over sin and desires to be without sin. Yet he owns and confesses his sin! As Spurgeon once said, “Sin is my name, sin is my nature; and to deny it is to deny the Word, deceive myself, and call God a liar. My old nature is such that I will sin until I die, for sin pollutes even the best thing I do.”

This scripture encourages the believer to trust and hope in the mercy of God *at all times!* It does not say, “If any man is holy, prayerful, and always faithful, he has an advocate;” but, it says, “If any man *sin*, he has an advocate with the Father.” It does not say, “If any many sins, he forfeits his right to Christ’s advocacy.” Grace that can be forfeited because of human failure is not grace at all. Mercy that is conditioned upon the merit of the creature is not mercy at all. If my title to glory rests upon my works, either *before or after* conversion, it is a total failure.

This scripture declares that at all times, under all conditions, Jesus Christ is our righteousness, our sanctification, our advocate, and our redemption. So, when I sin, when I consider my past or present and come creeping to my closet with a guilty conscience and an aching heart, I can rejoice in the mercy of my Father; for I have an advocate—*Jesus Christ the righteous!*

Truth and Nothing but the Truth

If sinners are not saved by the preaching of the truth of Christ, they will not be saved by the telling of lies. If “all the counsel of God” (His character, our condition, Christ’s person and work) has no effect

on sinners, our toning down the truth or mixing it with human works will not bring them to God.

There is but *one gospel* for all purposes and for all people. The very gospel that comforts the saint is the gospel which saves the sinner. Some have the idea that we get men saved by whatever means, then we teach them “the doctrines of grace.” Not so! It is grace that saves, grace that motivates, and grace that comforts.

Be Not Discouraged

Persecution and opposition ought to encourage us rather than to discourage us, for we are faithfully warned by our Lord that the natural man and the religionist will not receive the gospel of the grace of God.

True Beauty

For public worship (or for that matter, anywhere) believers (men and women) should be dressed in apparel which is not conspicuous, showy, extreme, or suggestive. Those who worship God should not adorn themselves in such a way as to attract undue attention, encourage conversation about their vanity, nor to display their wealth.

Every believer must realize, from God’s Word, that our one grand objective is to glorify Christ and that *true beauty* and attractiveness is not the adornment of the body but the *right ordering of the heart!*

Is any Sick Among You?

James 5:14-15

Is any sick among you? The bodies of believers (as well as others) are liable to a variety of diseases.

Let him call for the elders of the church. This may mean those who hold that office by the authority of the church or the older men of the church, sound in faith and experience.

And let them pray over him. Let these men pray for his comfort, for his recovery, and for the grace of God to strengthen him in his need.

Anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. Some suggest that this means to use ordinary medicine as well as prayer. Some suggest that anointing with oil should not be done since the extraordinary gift of healing, given to the apostles, has ceased. Others say that the anointing with oil is symbolic of the Spirit of God and should be applied as this scripture commands. But whether we use medicine, anoint with oil, or do not anoint with oil, let us pray for the sick and let our prayers and desires go forth in the name of Christ, for the glory of Christ, and according to the will of our Lord Jesus.

We cannot say that God will heal every one for whom we pray. It may be his will for that person to die or to bear the affliction longer, for his good and for God's glory. But, when we pray, let it be "the prayer of faith;" for we can certainly say that faithless prayer will not be heard (Heb. 11:6).

The End of All Things

The ultimate end of all things that come to pass, including the ultimate end of the great drama of redemption, is found in the glory of the eternal God.

Here is Love

To find love you need to send one whose heart and soul is full of love. John, the beloved, looks over all space, time, history, and men, and finally, his eye comes to rest in one place; and he says, "Herein is

love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins” (1 Jn. 4:10).

There is water in a thousand places, like the drops of dew on a flower; but, when one discovers the ocean, he says, “Here is water.” There is light here and light there; but, when one looks at the sun, he says, “Here is light.”

So the Apostle does not point to his own heart, nor to the church, nor even to a devoted mother and say, “Here is love”: for that love is but a little pool filled from the great sea and reflected light from the sun of love. He looks to our heavenly Father and the unspeakable gift of his affection; and he says, “herein is love.”

Confessing Christ

Our Lord said, “Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven” (Mt. 10:32). What is it to confess Christ?

1. It is to have an understanding in the mind of *who* Christ is, *what* Christ did, and *where* Christ is. “The Son of God has come and given us an understanding...”

2. It is to believe Christ in the heart (Rom. 10:9-10), to receive Christ with a sincere and genuine heart love, and committal as Lord and Saviour as our Prophet, Priest, and King.

3. It is to confess Christ openly and publicly in believer’s baptism. “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.” Baptism does not save nor add anything to the Saviour’s work; but it is a confession of, identification with, and testimony of the death, burial, and resurrection of our Lord, and our own death to sin and resurrection to walk with him.

4. It is identification with the church of our Lord Jesus, the people who love him, and the preachers who preach his gospel of free and sovereign grace. Paul said to Timothy, “Be not ashamed of the

testimony [gospel] of our God, nor of me his servant, but be ready yourself to partake [be identified] of the afflictions of the gospel.” Where the gospel is preached, where the true people of God meet to worship, where the name of Christ is worshipped and exalted, there I want to be! And if I truly love Christ and confess Christ, there *I will be!*

5. It is to speak of Christ daily in conversation, prayer, and as a faithful witness.

His Resurrection and Our Regeneration

The power of God that quickened us and made us to live spiritually is, in the scriptures, compared with that power which raised Christ from the dead. Christ died for our sins and was raised for our justification. We live because he lives; and we are free from sin because our surety, who bore our sins, is now free from them. But there is a likeness between his resurrection and our regeneration and quickening.

1. His resurrection is called a begetting. He is the first-begotten from the dead. Our regeneration is called a begetting (1 Pet. 1:3).

2. His human body was lifeless in the grave, as natural men are dead in sin and without spiritual life.

3. His human body could not raise itself, as we cannot give ourselves life.

4. His resurrection was the pure, unaided work of God, as is our regeneration (Eph. 2:1).

5. His resurrection led to his exaltation at the right hand of God, and there is where, in our representative Jesus Christ, we are already seated (Eph. 2:6).

Put on the New Man

To “put on the new man” is certainly not to make ourselves new creatures in Christ; for this is God’s work and not man’s. It is God who regenerates and creates a new man in true righteousness and holiness.

But to “put on the new man” is to walk daily according to the principles of grace and holiness formed in us. Walk in the Spirit of Christ and avoid not only the works of evil but the very appearance of evil (1 Thess. 5:22).

Christ Our Righteousness

“Jehovah, our righteousness.” Christ in his life on earth was so righteous that we may say of that life, taken as a whole, that it is *the righteousness of God himself*. And it is in this righteousness that every believer appears before God.

“Bold shall we stand in that great day,
For who aught to our charge shall lay?”⁵⁸

We Come to a Person

I hear men talking about coming to faith in Christ. Without being contentious, wouldn’t it be more accurate to say, “I came *to Christ* in faith”? Faith comes to us as the gift of God, through the work of God’s Spirit and the Word of God; and by faith, and in faith *we come to Christ!* Christ is the fountain, Christ is our life, Christ is made unto us all things—wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. We do not find these things in faith but *in Christ*.

As Bonar said in his great hymn,

⁵⁸ Zinzendorf, Count Nicolaus Ludwig von. *Jesus, the Lord our Righteousness*. Translated by John Wesley.

“I came to Jesus as I was,
weary, worn, and sad;
I found *in him* a resting place,
And *He* has made me glad.”⁵⁹

Also men say, “I came to the doctrines of grace.” One can come to a doctrine or even learn a system of doctrine and never come to Christ. You may weary of hearing me say it, but salvation is not in a decision, profession of faith, mental acceptance of facts, nor the letter of the law. Salvation is in a person!

This is what Christ told Martha, who insisted that she *believed* in the resurrection. “I AM the resurrection and the life.” We live because he lives and we are in him. We are accepted because he is accepted and we are in him. Paul cried, “That I may win Christ and be found in him” (Phil. 3:8-10).

Once

“And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.”

Hebrews 9:27-28

As men die just once and face judgement but once, so Jesus Christ was *once offered* to bear the sins of many. They are paid for and put away; and unto all who believe and look to and for him, shall he appear without sin unto eternal glory.

⁵⁹ Bonar, Horatius. I Heard the Voice of Jesus Say. 1846.

Accepted and Seated

Our Lord Jesus Christ, who was born of Mary, crucified in our stead, arose on the third day, and ascended to the heavens, is seated on the right hand of the majesty in the heavens.

He is *seated*, which shows that his *work is done*. He is on the *right hand*, which shows that his *work is accepted*. He is possessed of honor, glory, and authority. And we are accepted and seated in him.

Put on Love

Above all things put on love, which is the bond of perfectness. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts.

Colossians 3:14-15

The most necessary grace is love. As Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 13, “The greatest of these is love.” Love is the bond which binds everything together in complete harmony for the glory of God and the good of one another. Knowledge, activity, zeal, and morality will not bind us to Christ nor to one another.

Love will assure that the peace which comes through Christ and the peace that comes from the indwelling Christ will actually rule our hearts, deciding and settling all matters that arise. As members of the body of Christ, we are called to live in love and peace.

Let us be thankful, first to God for all grace, and then to one another. These virtues are absolutely necessary; for where love, peace, and thanksgiving are absent, faith is absent!

Come in Sackcloth With a Rope About Your Neck

Ahab may have sinned against God in sparing the wicked Benhadad, whom God had appointed to destruction, but the faith of these enemies in the mercy of the King of Israel and the way that they came before him (in sackcloth with ropes around their necks) is still a good lesson for all guilty sinners who seek the mercy of God (1 Ki. 20:31-32).

Come, sinner, come to God in the sackcloth of repentance, with a rope about your neck, justifying God's right to destroy you, and owning your just condemnation (Lk. 23:39-43). God is plenteous in mercy to those who seek mercy, but the proud he will send away empty. We have justly earned and deserve Death—the wages of sin; but *the gift of God* is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord (Rom. 6:23).

Do Not Praise Yourself

We have no reason at any time to glory in ourselves nor in our works, but only to thank, praise, and give glory to God who is pleased to redeem such worthless creatures and to use us in some way to accomplish his purpose. Matthew Henry once said, “As much against the grain as it is for a proud man to acknowledge his infirmities, so much is it against the grain of a child of God to speak in his own praise.”⁶⁰

It is not the man who praises and commends himself who is approved and accepted, but it is the person whom God accepts and approves in Christ. “Let another man praise thee, and not thine own mouth; a stranger, and not thine own lips” (Prov. 27:2).

⁶⁰ Henry, Matthew. *Commentary on the Whole Bible*. Exposition on 2 Corinthian 11. London: 1706.

We Must Have a Mediator

If the Lord Jesus had not taken our nature and stood before God for us, the justice of God would not and could not have spared us. When he was numbered with the transgressors and bore our sins, justice did not spare him (Rom. 8:32).

Luther saw this and cried, “I will have nothing to do with an absolute God;” that is, with God outside of Christ. Woe forevermore to that man or woman who meets a just and holy God without a mediator.

The Purpose and Use of the Law

The law is not made for a righteous man but for the lawless and disobedient.

1 Timothy 1:9

No man is righteous in himself. The righteous man here intended is the man who believes God with the heart unto righteousness and who lays hold of Christ’s righteousness by faith, which causes him to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this world. The law of God does not lie upon him as a weight and a burden, forcing him into a way of life which he does not enjoy! He delights in the law of God, and God’s commandments are not grievous to him. He is a new creature in Christ, and his deepest desire is to know Christ, obey Christ, and glorify Christ in conversation and conduct.

The gospel no more excuses sin than the law does; what is contrary to one is contrary to the other. But it is not the law which motivates the believer, keeps him from lying, stealing, killing, and committing adultery, nor makes him generous, loving, and faithful. It is the nature of God within him; it is his love for Christ and holiness.

He does not worship, love, and give because he is *commanded* to do so; he does it *because he wants to!* Laws are enacted to control and convict the lawless and disobedient.

Our Conversation

Let our conversation be seasoned with grace and language which is spiritually beneficial to others. Let us avoid unwholesome words, so much worthless talk, gossip, and *excessive* levity. Laughter is enjoyable and good humor is wholesome, but too much foolishness and levity is *offensive* and damaging to our message and witness.

The Limits of Self-Righteousness

There are three things that self-righteousness can never do; it can never honor the divine law, it can never satisfy divine justice, and it can never quiet a guilty conscience.

Five Searching Questions

1. Are my desires for a saving interest in Christ genuine and sincere? He accused some of following him because of miracles and for loaves and fishes. I would win Christ!

2. Are my desires for a saving interest in Christ honoring to him? I would be saved only in that way which honors his law and satisfies his justice—the way of the cross!

3. Are my desires for Christ permanent or only a passing fancy born of emotion? A true desire for Christ has nothing to do with health or wealth, time or trouble, feelings or flesh—it is a heart quest.

4. Do my desires for Christ lead me to seek him in his Word, in his house, and among his people? I am not ashamed of the gospel, those who preach it, nor those who believe it. I would be identified with him and His.

5. Will my desire for Christ find no full satisfaction until I awake with his likeness? If so, I may entertain a good hope that I am an object of his love.

Abide in Me

It is true that once a man is saved by God's grace through faith, he will remain saved forever; yet the Scriptures are full of warnings to believers against unbelief (Heb. 3:12-14), against drawing back (Heb. 10:38-39), and against neglecting the Word of God (Heb. 2:1-3).

Abiding in Christ is abiding in his *Word*, abiding in his *love*, and abiding in his *spirit* and in *faith*. This abiding in Christ is *not* a condition which a man fulfills before receiving life, but abiding in Christ is a result of Christ's gift of life and is true evidence that we have the life of Christ.

Branches on a grapevine do not bear fruit by themselves but from the vine and as a result of their union with the life-giving vine. Neither can any man bear, produce, nor possess any spiritual knowledge, life, gift, grace, or holiness except through Christ's abiding in him and *his abiding in Christ*.

The Foolishness of Preaching

There are three reasons why the preaching of the cross is foolishness to natural men.

1. It deals with a subject in which they have no interest—the pardon of *sin*.
2. It does not recognize human merit, works, nor righteousness.
3. It reveals how God can be just and justifier, something they have never considered.

Christ, All Our Righteousness

When we review the fall of man in the garden, we discover how great was that fall and how infinite was our loss. We became corrupt,

dying creatures; once strong, now weak; once healthy, now sick; once always living, now always dying. Pain, sorrow, sickness, and death is our lot. We lost happiness and became creatures of fear, shame, hate, and greed. We can't live alone and we can't live together. We lost fellowship with God; our sins have separated us from his presence and his favor. We are not *dying* men spiritually; we are *dead* men!

But underlying the whole matter is the sobering truth that in the fall, man lost his righteous nature. God made man upright; but man became a sinner, a transgressor, a rebel, and an ungodly creature.

We have changed; oh, how we have changed; but God has not changed. The Lord is still the same in holiness, justice, and truth. What he *has* required, he *still* requires. He demands of the creature what he must demand. He commands what men cannot produce—A *perfect righteousness*! Who shall stand in his presence? “He that hath clean hands and a pure heart.” What doth the Lord require of us? What he has always required—to fear God, to walk in *all* his ways, to love God and to serve him in perfection with all thy heart and soul!

This is impossible! Of course it is, with you and me, but not with Christ. The Lord Jesus in the flesh fulfilled all that the Father required and satisfied his holy justice perfectly for all who believe. Jeremiah called him “The Lord our Righteousness.” Righteousness cannot be found in us, nor in our works, nor in the law; but it is found in Christ. “I find no fault in him” declares heaven, earth, and hell.

Oh, that I may win Christ and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is but filthy rags; but, with his spotless garment on, I am as holy as his dear Son!

Three Significant Things From John 6:51

1. “I am the living bread.” He is the living God, who is life, who ever lives, and who gives life to dead sinners.

2. “The bread that I will give is my flesh.” To give his flesh was to offer himself as a sacrifice for sin.

3. "I will give myself for the life of the world." Not Jews only but for sinners of every nation; "and if any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever."

The 7000 Club

Oh Lord of the harvest, raise up true and faithful laborers, preachers and pastors. Laborers who are not concerned for worldly honor, gain, nor possessions, but for the spiritual welfare of their hearers, the glory of God, and the preeminence of Jesus Christ. Laborers who fear neither men of the world nor men of the church, who fear not loneliness nor failure, whose only fear is "the fear of the Lord." Laborers who know how to be abased and how to abound, how to live with poverty and plenty, and to treat those two imposters as the same. Laborers who are *complete in Christ* and *content with Christ*, and who are quite determined to preach Christ and him crucified. Laborers who love their Master and have no complaint with where they labor nor how long they labor and are willing to leave the harvest in his hands.

Are we as destitute for true laborers as it seems? Is the famine of hearing the Word of God as wide-spread as it appears? Oh God, where are *the 7000* who have "not bowed their knee to Baal nor kissed him with their mouths"? (1 Ki. 19:18).

This is truly the order: first, *the knee* buckles under the strain of fear, opposition, criticism, loneliness, and trial; then *the mouth* follows with soft words of compromise and smooth intellectual words of man's wisdom, which lessens the offense of the cross.

Oh, to be a member of *The 7000 Club!*

Submit Yourselves to God

God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble. Submit yourself therefore to God.

James 4:6-7

The way to overcome pride and defeat the spirit of envy, strife, and contention is to *submit yourselves to God*:

1. To his will regarding gifts, natural or spiritual.
2. To leave it to God to make us what he would have us to be.
3. To leave it to God to prosper or empty us.
4. To leave it to God to honor or humiliate us.

Resist thoughts of envy, jealousy, covetousness, and fretting, and submit yourselves to God. Our Lord is mindful of our needs and will supply (Phil. 4:19).

Believe Him

Our Lord declares, “Ye must be born again.” He also said to the same man, “As Moses lifted up the serpent, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.”

Believe on Christ and you *are* born again! That act of faith is a clear indication that the new birth *has* taken place. There is a vital and wonderful connection between the preached word, the new birth, and believing on Christ which makes them inseparable.

My business is to preach the true gospel; yours is to *believe him!* Will you? Can you? You can if you will.

Shun All Superstition

True believers have no superstitions regarding days, hallowed places, religious relics, symbols and signs, nor ancestors (Phil. 3:4-10). Christ is our sabbath, our sin-offering, our high priest, our altar, our mediator, our prophet, priest, and king.

We bow before no man, make pilgrimages to no place on earth (our God is everywhere), carry no religious symbols, and place no merit whatsoever in religious holidays such as Christmas and Easter.

Preach Christ, Not About Him

The tendency of men, if left alone, is to drift father from God; and preachers are no exception. If left alone, they depart from preaching the true gospel of Jesus Christ and begin to major on other things. It was true in the early days of the church. For the first few years after our Lord ascended, Christ was preached; but, gradually preachers and churches began to preach works, ceremony, law, and tradition. Read the epistles of Corinthians and Galatians.

It is no different today. Where can you go and hear Christ preached? Men preach *about* the gospel and doctrines about Christ, but John called our gospel “the doctrine *of* Christ,” not the doctrine *about* Christ.

It would be easy to give the sum and substance of Paul’s message; it was *Jesus Christ and him crucified!* If you had asked Paul his creed, he would have said, “My creed is Christ.” If you had inquired as to his body of divinity, he would have replied, “There is but one body of divinity”—“*In him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.*”

To these apostles Christ was not a historical character, a creed, nor a plan of salvation; he was their Lord, real to their minds, the first love of their hearts, who was, is, and is to come—*my Lord and my God.*

Four Lessons to Learn

Isaiah evidently learned much from the death of king Uzziah. He said, “In the year that king Uzziah died, I saw also the Lord; [I saw myself and I saw the condition of the people]” (Isa. 6:1-6).

1. *God is holy!* Our God is infinitely, indescribably holy in all his ways, acts, and nature. He will in no wise clear the guilty nor receive any man apart from perfect holiness. He will not speak to, nor be spoken to by, any sinful creature. He is unapproachable except through the Mediator.

2. *Men are sinners!* “There is none that doeth good, no not one.” There is none righteous. “Your sins have separated you and your God.” “Every imagination of the heart of man is evil continually.”

3. *There is a way to God!* Our God, in mercy and grace, has determined to redeem, sanctify, and receive a people out of every tribe, kindred, and tongue; but, only in the way consistent with his holiness, righteousness, and truth. He will be both just and justifier; he will be both merciful and righteous; he will be a just God and a Saviour (Isa. 45:20-25).

4. *Christ is the way!* Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, came to earth made of woman, made under the law to redeem. He is our *surety* by divine decree; he is our *righteousness* by perfect obedience; he is our *sacrifice, sin-offering, and atonement* by death; he is our risen *justifier* and our *Great High Priest* who intercedes at God’s right hand. No man cometh to God but by, in, and through Christ Jesus (Jn. 14:6).

What Think Ye of Christ?

The question is asked, “What think ye of Christ?” The question has to do with *thoughts*, not words, written creeds, or religious traditions. The question has to do with *your* thoughts, not of your church, your preachers, nor the old writers; but what do *you* think of Jesus Christ.

A person's salvation depends on his *thoughts* of Christ; his thoughts of Christ depend upon his *understanding* of the person and work of Christ; and his understanding of Christ depends on what he has *heard, learned,* and been *taught* of Christ by the Father (Jn. 6:44-45).

Tell me what you think of Christ Jesus, and I will tell you what you believe about the character of God, the condition of men, and the way God saves sinners. Tell me what you think of Christ Jesus and you reveal whether you understand and believe the gospel of a "just God and a Saviour."

Happiness

Blessed is that man that maketh the Lord his trust.

Psalm 40:4

David is saying, "Oh, the happiness of the man who makes the Lord Jesus his refuge and trust." Oh, the happiness of the man who can say with Job, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust him;" who can say with Peter, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God;" who can say with John, "We know that we have passed from death to life."

That man may be as poor as Lazarus, as tried as Job, as lonely as Elijah, as persecuted as Paul, and as sick as Epaphroditus; but, if God is his trust, none of these outward afflictions can keep him from being happy. "Happy is the man to whom God will not charge sin."

Tie The Scarlet Line

In most circles it is unfashionable to believe in the old gospel of substitution and atonement. "Modern culture" and intellectualism have altered the Bible and religion until there is no real sin-offering and sacrifice left. The blood of his cross and the obedience of his life

are only examples now, and not a propitiation, payment, nor imputed righteousness.

As for me, I tie the scarlet line in my window; I put the blood on my door; I stand amazed as my great High Priest enters within the veil with his own blood to make atonement for my soul. In the midst of a thousand “new gospels” that aren’t worth the breath it takes to preach them, I hold in my heart and soul to the gospel of God concerning his Son, who was wounded for my transgressions, bruised for my iniquities, and by whose stripes I am healed.

Like Rahab of old, tie the scarlet line in your window. If no one else sees it, *God will!* If no one else is pleased—*God is!*

“Ere since by faith, I saw the stream
Thy flowing wounds supply,
Redeeming love has been my theme,
And shall be ‘til I die.”⁶¹

Controversy

Controversy is never a happy element for the child of God. He would far rather be in sweet fellowship than engaged in the defense of the faith. But, as a soldier, he has learned to obey; and the rule of his obedience is not his personal comfort, but his Lord’s command, his Lord’s gospel, and his Lord’s glory. Attack any of these and he will do battle.

Look Only to Him

We must look to Christ and Christ alone as the propitiation for our sins, and be careful that our faith is single and fixed only on him. I have known preachers to emphasize a sense of sin and repentance to the point that some of their hearers find a sort of rest in their guilt,

⁶¹ Cowper, William. *There is a Fountain Filled With Blood*. Conyer’s Collection of Psalms and Hymns. London: 1772.

conviction, and feelings of unworthiness. *It is Christ who gives us rest*; it is not being the chief of sinners that gives us rest.

I realize that those who come to Christ will indeed acknowledge their sins, will experience a genuine repentance before God, and will believe the gospel; but none of these things contribute in any way to the removal of sin nor to the redemption of the soul. This is the work of *Christ alone*. “When he had *by himself* purged our sins, he sat down on the right hand of the majesty in heaven.”

It is the Son of Man lifted up who heals. How *long* you have suffered, how *severe* your wound, and how *great* your pain, has nothing to do with the *cure*! Look to *him* and be made whole.

Do You Love Him?

Peter was grieved when the Lord asked him the third time, “Lovest thou me?” It has been suggested that the Lord asked this question three times because Peter denied him three times. I’m sure that the memory of that incident added to Peter’s grief that the Lord should keep repeating this same question. Peter appealed to the Lord’s complete knowledge of all things, of all hearts and thoughts, and replied, “Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee.”

This is the *vital issue* for all professed Christians; “Do you love Christ?” It is not, do you love the sovereignty of God, the doctrine, the Bible, the church, or even the people of God (though you certainly will love all these if you love Christ). But *do you love him*? This is where life and hope and grace are born—love for Christ (1 Cor. 16:22).

Number the Days

Richard Baxter once said, “I preach as one who may never preach again, and as a dying man to dying men.” We need to learn the all-

important lesson, “It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgement,” and live our days in Christ, awaiting his call.

It is so foolish to set our affection on a dying world and its short-lived comforts and relationships. Ryle said, “For a moment of time, men lose a glorious eternity.” We are toiling and wearying ourselves about trifles, running to and fro like ants on a hill to build that which shall soon crumble, not realizing that in a few years we shall all be gone and another generation will fill our place. “Lord, teach *me* to number my days that I may apply my heart to *wisdom*.”

How Sinful are We?

We can read the Scriptures which declare, “There is none good, no not one...every imagination of man’s heart is only evil continually...our righteousnesses are filthy rags...man at his best state is vanity;” but what makes this question difficult to answer is the fact that we have such little understanding of true holiness. We compare ourselves with ourselves and arrive at a weak, perverted view of sin. A man’s conception of sin is determined by his understanding of *true holiness*. I declare, without reservation, that a man will never come to an understanding of the exceeding sinfulness of sin until he sees the holiness and righteousness of the Lord God!

Job was an honest, upright, and righteous man in his own eyes until he saw the Lord; and then he cried, “I abhor *myself*.” Isaiah put a “woe” on everyone else until he saw the Lord; and then he cried, Woe is *me*, I am undone.

Until preachers begin to preach the true character of our God in his awesome holiness, justice, and righteousness, men will not be convicted of sin, righteousness, and judgement and will continue in their efforts to establish a righteousness of their own, denying the necessity of a *redeemer*, who alone can enable God to be both just and justifier (Rom. 3:25-26).

Depart from Iniquity

Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure having this seal, the Lord knoweth them that are His. And let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.

2 Timothy 2:19

The doctrines of grace in the head are worth very little if the fruit of grace is not evident in our walk.

Giving

At this time of the year much is said about gifts and giving. Almost everyone will be giving and receiving gifts during the next few days. Here are a few words in reference to the subject.

1. The ability to give properly is a *grace*. “See that ye abound in this grace also” (2 Cor. 8:7).

2. The gifts God owns and blesses are given from a *cheerful* and *willing* heart (2 Cor. 8:12; 9:7), “not of necessity,” but motivated by the love and example of our generous Lord.

3. The value and size of the gift is totally immaterial in the sight of God as long as it reflects *the ability of the giver* (2 Cor. 8:12). “It is accepted according to that a man *hath*, and not according to that he *hath not*.” We give as God enables us to give.

4. “*Freely* ye have received, *freely* give” (Mt. 10:8). The world talks of “exchanging gifts;” the believer gives “hoping for nothing in return,” but with thanksgiving to God “for his *unspeakable* gift.” You may think me to be radical, but a man’s *deeds* of generosity and sacrifice tell me more of his spiritual state than his *words* can ever convey. Who said, “What you are speaks so loudly that I cannot hear what you are saying”?⁶²

⁶² Various attributed to Ralph Waldo Emerson.

