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## **“Christ: God’s Everything”**

J.W. Sims

As we have been sharing, Christ is God’s everything. When God gave to us His Son, He gave to us everything we need. Everything we have is because of what Christ is. He does not simply give us salvation, He is our salvation, He does not simply give us righteousness He is our righteousness, He does not simply give to us forgiveness, He is our forgiveness. The same is true of everything we have or we think we need to have, for when we were given Christ we were given everything we need for every problem and difficulty of life.

Christ is to be all and in all, to God the Father it is Christ and Christ alone. All things are to come together in Christ, and one day this will be the source of the world’s unity. To miss Christ is to miss everything that God has for you and I. God looks only unto His Son and therefore it is essential that His Son truly be in our lives. We cannot simply learn about Him, or think about Him, we must have Him in our lives; therefore, we each must be careful to receive Him and to walk with Him.

I cannot remind you and myself enough that it is not what Christ gives to us, it is what Christ is for us. Christ gives nothing that is not from what He is. He can only give to us what we need because he is what we need. In Christ we find everything we need, because Christ is everything we need. What is it that you think you need? You need salvation? Christ is your salvation. You need patience? Christ is your patience. You need peace? Christ is your peace? You need strength? Christ is your strength. You need victory over sin? Christ is your victory. You need deliverance over bondage? Christ is your deliverance. We need to take our eyes off of the things we think we need and place them upon Christ and allow Him to be what we need. This will prevent us from always praying for this or that, and from always seeking this or that to simply resting and receiving all that Christ is. Therefore, we come to a place in our lives where we stopping asking, and start praising.

Ephesians 1:9-10 shares an important truth to us: **“Having made known unto us the mystery of his will according to his**

**good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: That in the dispensation of the fullness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him.”**

Here it is made clear what is made known as the will of God and the good pleasure of God, that in the fullness of times, when the time is right, that all things might be gathered together into one all things in Christ, and that is things in heaven and things upon the earth. Do we not see how important Christ is to the Father, it is the very purpose of God and is therefore what He bringing to pass that every thing, every person and every purpose will one day be brought together in Christ. We must be in Christ and Christ must be in your and I, for only in Christ will all things one day be brought together and if you are not in Christ, we will miss the plan and purpose of God.

We need to realize that Satan is working and doing his best even now to oppose this work of God, he is working to bring together a one world headed up by the antichrist, and many there are who are going to be deceived and many there are who are working toward this false unity, who will be caught up with a worldly kingdom. Only those who are in Christ and being brought together in Him however, will be in the eternal and everlasting kingdom.

Let us now look at a few verses that simply are to be used to reveal to us what we have because we have Christ.

Ephesians 2:13-14 **“But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For He is our peace...”** Please note carefully that it is not simply that He gives to us peace, He in fact is our peace. You say” “I just do not have peace in my life” Well, do you have Christ? God the Father expresses that you do have peace; you just need to rest in it, because Christ is your peace.

I Corinthians 1:30-31 **“But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let Him glory in the Lord.”**

Here again, not closely at what you and I have because we have Christ. Do you pray for wisdom and various situations? Christ is your

wisdom and if you have Christ, you have wisdom. Do you dwell on your unrighteousness? Do you hang your head over being unworthy and unclean? You and I can never by our lives be clean before God, Christ is our righteousness, and to have Christ is to be righteous, it has nothing to do with me, but has everything to do with Him.

Sanctification is a big word and the basis of many books, but basically sanctification is separation, it means that you and I have been separated from the world and separated unto God. It means that we have be set aside for God and because we have we are holy. Therefore, I ask, "What is my holiness?" And the answer becomes, Christ is my holiness, I am holy because He is my holiness.

How many there are who question their salvation; that is they are not certain whether they are saved or not. According to this verse we should not question our salvation if we have connected to Christ, for as we read here He is our redemption. Therefore, we ask does God give me redemption? No, God gives to me His Son, and His Son is my redemption. I am redeemed, not because I have been given redemption, but because Christ is my redemption. How an understanding of these truths raises our love, praise and adoration of Christ. No wonder verse 31 says that if a man glorieth let him glory in the Lord.

I Timothy 1:1 speaks of Christ as our hope. People hope all kinds of things, but did you know that Christ is your hope? This is a great word in the Greek and means expectation or confidence. It is not a question mark word, but rather it is an expectation of what is going to take place, it is confidence that it will take place, and for you and I as believers find that Christ is our hope, and with Him there is no question.

## **“Because of Christ”**

J.W. Sims

We have been learning how that Christ is everything to God the Father, and for us to have Christ is to have everything we need. As we present this lesson we continue to present what we have and enjoy because we are in Christ.

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

The first blessed speaks of being adorable of adoration, our Father is to received adoration because He is adorable and because He hath blessed us with all spiritual blessing in heavenly places in Christ. We who are in Christ are in heavenly places, not earthly places and in Christ we are blessed bountifully given everything we could possible ever need, for when we have Christ we have everything we need.

I Corinthians 1:4-5 **“I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ; That in every thing ye are enriched by him, in all utterance, and in all knowledge.”**

You and I have been made rich, we have been made wealthy because we are in Christ. Specifically the passage is speaking to the Corinthians concerning the gifts that they have, but most certainly we can hold to the rich truth that Jesus Christ enriches you and me. Certainly, if there is any message that is misused today it is the message of riches and how the Father wants to prosper us, but we are rich in the spiritual riches of Christ, though we may not be rich in this world's goods.

Ephesians 3:8 reads: **“Unto me is given who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.”** What a blessed statement this is that Paul says here, for he expresses that by the grace of God he is allowed to preach the unsearchable, meaning the riches of Christ that are past finding out. How can you or I understand or teach these riches of Christ that we have when even Paul expresses that they are past finding out.

Ephesians 3:16 expresses how important these riches of Christ are to you and I for here we read: **“That he would grant you according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man.”** The being strengthened by His might through the Spirit in the inner man comes to us as the result of the riches of His glory.

We might ask, Okay we are rich, but how did we get that way? What is it that made you and I rich? 2 Corinthians 8:9 **“for ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.”**

The riches that you and I enjoy came to us at a great price. Christ did not simply deal our riches to us as someone might simply give to us funds from their wallet. The riches of Christ came to us by His willingness to become poor so that we might become riches. He was the Son of God and enjoyed the riches of a glory that is beyond our comprehension and He was willing to give it all up, to become poor to become just like us so that we might become rich. How blessed is this?

Yes, as believers we have so much because Christ has been willing to give up so much. In 1 Corinthians 15:22 we read: **“For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.”** People just do not know or comprehend the value of Christ; if we are only born into the family of Adam we die, but if we are born again into the family of Christ we live.

In our world people talk about the importance of being free, that is being able to do what they want without any authority telling them what to do and where to go. People want freedom, but if you are not in Christ you only thing you are free, because you are very much in bondage to Satan, to this world and to the lusts of your own flesh. Galatians 5:1 reads: **“Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.”**

Only believers are truly free, free from the bondage of sin, free from the hold of the enemy and free from the Old Testament law. Today, as a believer who is in Christ, you and I are free to be led by the Spirit

of God and no longer are held by what man would place upon us as a requirement.

Philippians 4:12-13 gives to us important truth in regard to getting along in life. We are to hold on to the truth that because of Christ we can do all things especially when it comes to having little or having much.

Philippians 1:20-21 For Paul to make the statement that he makes here is just unbelievable especially to people in our day, imagine being able to say: "for me to live is Christ"? Even believers have so many things in their lives today; that few would say for me to live is Christ.

Galatians 4:19

John 17:22 "And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one."

How can we comprehend that we have been given all the glory of God, which was given to Christ, and then Christ gave to us? This glory is honor and dignity that has been given to us because of Christ.



## **“Christ the Power of Light”**

J.W. Sims

It has been a joy for me to look into the Word to study this issue of light and darkness. Light and darkness give a clear division between that which is righteous and that, which is unrighteous, a clear message between, that which is clean and that which is unclean, between those who are saved and those who are not.

As I have pointed out believers love light while non-believers love darkness. There is a clear division between that which is light and that which is dark, for God Himself has made that division.

In Exodus 10 we are given one of the most beautiful pictures of the separation between the light in a believer and the darkness in the non-believer.

**V.21 “And the Lord said unto Moses, stretch out thine hand toward heaven, that there may be darkness over the land of Egypt, even darkness which may be felt.”** One of the plagues sent out over Egypt was a plague of darkness, a plague of darkness that revealed the brightness and glory of God and His people while it revealed the darkness of Egypt’s false God, their Sun god Re. Is it not interesting that God would use darkness to oppose their supposed light of the sun and their false god named Re. Note, please that God is capable of sending darkness to any nation that would reject and oppose Him, a darkness that I believe is being sent out to many nations that are rejecting Him today. This darkness is so real, so thick that it is a darkness that can be felt. Have you ever been in a place that is so dark you can feel the darkness, the uncleanness, and the spiritual corruptness? Talk to some missionaries who have been in dark lands where they reject God and worship the enemy, believe me it is a darkness that can be felt. The word used here means that it is such a darkness that one would have to grope or feel to try and get around.

**v.22“And Moses stretched forth his hand toward heaven; and there was a thick darkness in all the land of Egypt for three days:”** Note please that Moses stretched out his hand unto heaven for this darkness is ordained and sent by God not by the enemy. It is darkness over the whole land, not just part of it.

**V.23 “They saw not one another neither rose any from his place for three days:”** Who can imagine such darkness? How scary it

must have been for a people who worshipped the Sun god? They could not see one another, and they did not even rise from their place for three days. To them it must have been as they were dead, and yet we know of no one turning from their false god of light to the living God. **“But all the children of Israel had light in their dwellings.”** What wonderful division is that? What a wondrous testimony of God and His children, where His people are there is light and where the non-believers are there is darkness. It is no different for you and I for everywhere we are there is light, even though we may work and live among individuals who walk in darkness.

So many are in darkness today but seem to have no awareness of it, they have learned to function in their darkness, even to be comfortable there. Isaiah 9 that speaks of the coming Savior in verse 2 says this: **“The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined.”** Unless by the work of God’s Spirit light comes to us we cannot see it, we will criticize it, we will rebuke it, we will strike out against it. When you only have darkness you can see nothing else. Finally, a light from God has come and it is a great light, and now where there was darkness and even death there is a light, a light that shined upon them. We are desperate for the light of God to shine upon our nation and upon our family and friends. May we each be prayerful that the light of God will shine and will be seen by those who have no desire to see?

In John 1:6-9 **“There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. The same came for a witness of the light that all men through him might believe.”** On the one hand we see the grace and love of God and on the other we see the terrible darkness that is in the hearts of men. John was sent to witness to man concerning the light of Christ, but the blindness of men was so great that they needed John to point out the light to them. Imagine there being light but not being able to see it? When someone has to tell you here is the light you are most certainly very blind. John we are told is not that light he just came to bear witness of the Christ who alone is the true light, the light that is able to lighten every man in the world. It was the purpose of John according to Luke 1:79 to give light to those who sit in darkness and to bring them in the way of peace. How this

needs to be our prayer that God will again be gracious and have men who will reveal and point us to the light of Christ.

God knows we are in darkness and that we must be brought out and that it requires a powerful work from Him therefore in 2 Corinthians 4:6 we read: **“For God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.”**

In our last lesson we learned in Genesis 1:1-3 that a movement of God was required to deal with the darkness upon the earth and that it required God to say let there be light, now we see that to bring the light of the knowledge of Christ into our lives required a command from God.

Repeatedly we are told that Christ is the light of the world, and because He is, He brings us into all of His light, therefore as a believer if we are to fellowship and know Him we must remain and walk in the light. As I John 1:7 reads: **“But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin.”**

Generally speaking if we have difficulty with a brother it is either because we are not walking in the light or he is not walking in the light, for when we both walk in the light we will have fellowship.

If there is anything that happens in the life of a new believer it is that he loves light and hates darkness. Wherever there is darkness there is his hatred and disgust. A believer cannot tolerate darkness for him darkness is an ugly, putrid, scary dimension that he wants nothing to do with. A non-believer may run toward darkness but a believer will run toward light. The problem for each of us is that darkness can slowly sneak up on us and bit by bit step by step where you are is darker and darker and your eyes have adjusted along with your heart, and there is no awareness until the light of Christ and the light of His Word is shown and you are amazed at the brightness, the clarity, and the joyfulness of the light. You are amazed that darkness had slipped in on you without your notice. O how this is happening in the church today causing believers to love and accept darkness even feeling comfortable in their darkness without realizing that darkness has penetrated their church, their family and even their own hearts.

John 8:12 **“I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.”** Yes, He is the light of the world and when we follow Him we will not walk in darkness but we will walk in His light, we will have the light of life in our lives. John 12:46 **“I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness.”** There you go, if you believe in Him you will not abide, you will not dwell in darkness.

We believers have been brought out of darkness and brought into the light of Christ therefore our lives have changed and we no longer live as we once lived.

I Thess 5:4-5 **“But ye brethren are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness.”** Today, with Christ within us we are lights in a darkened world and because we are we go around hurting the eyes of non-believers. Around us they need worldly sunglasses that will prevent their hearts from being over-ran by too much light.

Philippians 2:15 **“That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world.”** The word shine here means to lighten, and it implies that as you and I live in the dark world we enlighten it; we bring a little light into this ugly, gloomy and dark world. We each must ask ourselves how are we doing? Are we lightening up the world? Are we in our daily walk, work and activities hurting anyone’s eyes?

These lessons on darkness and light have touched my heart and helped me to realize that daily I need to be in prayer that God will send His light to my nation, to my community, my family and my own heart that together we might walk with Him and be prepared for His glorious coming.

## **“Christ and Christ Alone”**

### **Lesson I**

J.W. Sims

The church is full of programs; men are educated in how to use programs, methods and schemes to build up the church and lead men not only closer to God but into the service of God. Many believe and many are taught that the work of building the church is man's work. When one truly learns the truth of God, however, when his eyes are open to the value of Christ he soon realizes that man cannot build the church nor bring an individual to His Son, no, true spiritual work that is Biblical is not my work, nor is it your work it is God's work through the use of His Son and the work of His Spirit.

Some say: “God does not use methods, He does not use programs; He uses men. Watchmen Nee however, that wonderful and most used Bible teacher of God said: That all that God uses is His Son, Jesus Christ.” We need to realize that God's program, that God's method is Christ. It is not a doctrine, it is not a church, it is not a particular pastor or teacher, God's program is Christ, and to be trained in and to be pointing too anything other then Christ as a means of building a Church is not a Biblical view. It is not a work that will ever truly build the kingdom of God.

In John 14:6 we read: “I am the way, the truth and the life, no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.”  
God's program, God's method is Christ:

1. Christ is the way.
2. Christ is the truth.
3. Christ is the life.

Christ does not point us to the way, Christ does not point us to the truth, Christ does not point us to the life. No, it is far deeper, and far richer than that: Christ is the way, Christ is the truth, and Christ is the life. To have Christ is to have the way, to have Christ is to have the truth, and to have Christ is to have the life. So many are searching for a way in life, so many are searching for a particular truth to live by, and so many are looking for a life to live, but those who have Christ have the way, they have the truth and they have life.

If we are believers who have come to know Him, we no longer need to search for a way, we no longer need to search for a particular truth, and we no longer need to look for a life, we have it. As believers we do not have to waste time studying methods and programs, we do not have to waste time studying truths, we know Christ and we study Him, He is our program, and so it is Him we present and share.

When Christ said: "I am the way" He was saying I am the way to the Father, I am the method of the Father for bringing men to myself, I am the plan, I am the program. There is no other way, there is no other program, there is no other particular religion, there is no other means but me.

As believers, we do not want to follow a program other than Christ, we do not want to follow a teaching plan, a method, a person, we want to follow Christ and present Him.

Christ is God's means, He is God's everything and to have Him and to present Him is the priority of our lives. God does not give you and I this thing or that thing, God gives to us His Son, and for us His Son is everything. What do you need in your life? Christ is the answer. Christ is the Victory, Christ is the peace, Christ is the patience, Christ is the health, Christ is the wisdom, Christ is the healing, Christ is the salvation. Christ, is not simply the way to victory, He is the victory, Christ is not just the way to salvation, He is the salvation, He is not the way to patience, He is the patience. Anything you and I need is found in Christ. As believers we need to take our hearts and minds from the things that God might give and place them upon Christ that God has given.

What do we think of when we think of a way? I think of how to get somewhere, which way should I go? How do I get to a particular place, the way we get to the Father is by Christ, Christ is the way, Christ alone is the path. If you do not go the way of Christ you will not get to the Father, you will not be saved and you will be lost.

The basic idea here is very important for the church is so busy with programs, methods and procedures that can never bring life, they never bring satisfaction, sure they can keep us busy, they can cause us to think we are really accomplishing something, but when you are busy with Christ, when you are caught up with Christ, when

He alone is your method, your program, it is not simply busyness, it is life, and life that brings genuine spiritual fruit now, and for eternity.

Christ, is not only the way, but He also is the truth. How many there are, searching for truth today, how many there are who ask, "What is truth?"

The definition of truth in the Bible, is Jesus Christ, He alone is truth. He does not point to truth He is truth. The fact that He gives truth is because He is truth. Christ gives what He is He is truth, so from Him comes truth.

Christ is truth, The Holy Spirit is truth as is recorded in John 15:26 and also in I John 4:6. To know Christ is to know truth and when the Holy Spirit begins to move in our lives is to have the Spirit of truth move in our lives.

Not only is Christ truth, and the Holy Spirit truth, but also is the Word of God truth. 2 Timothy 2:15 expresses that we are to rightly divide the word of truth. Truth is important, if there is anything men need to see today it is truth. Truth reveals, it tells it as it really is, and when the truth of Christ falls upon us we see ourselves as we truly are and we therefore cry out to Him for forgiveness. Truth is more than a doctrine or a teaching, truth is reality and to know Christ is to know reality. 2 Timothy 3:7 expresses that in the latter days men will ever increase they're learning but never come to the knowledge of the truth. That is of course, because they refuse to come to Jesus Christ who alone is truth. John 8:32 reads "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." How important is this? Christ is the truth, and to know Christ is to be set free, it is to be taken from the bondage of sin, to the freedom of Christ. This verse is followed by verse 36 where we read "If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free in deed."

## **“Christ and Christ Alone”**

### **Lesson II**

J.W. Sims

As we continue our study we are reminded that Christ said: “I am the way, the truth and the life, no man cometh unto the Father but by me.” Our Savior is life; to have Him is to have life. He does not point us to life, and having a particular doctrine is not life, no, Christ is life. If I have life and you have life it is because we have Christ, for as the scripture says in I John 5:12 “He that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.” Therefore, this morning it is not based upon me, my church, my doctrine, my pastor it is based upon Christ, either I have Him or I do not have Him.

In John 11:25 we read: “Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life.” When Jesus brought Lazarus back to life it was because He was life. He is resurrection, and because He is you and I have the hope of resurrection. He was able to bring Lazarus back because He is life. He did not say: “I can bring him back to life” he said: “I am the resurrection.” It is not what Christ can do for me, it is what Christ is for me. He is life, He is healing, He is victory, He is peace, He is salvation – it is not what He gives it is what He is. He is everything you and I need for every situation in our lives. He is your peace, He is your joy. What He does is always based upon what He is, and He is life. When we understand this, we realize that Christ is not separate from what He gives, we must not look to Him to give us this or that, we must look to Him to be whatever we need. It is not what I can get from Him it is what He is for me. As believers we are to look at Him and everything He is for us, never what can I get from Him. In ministry today our emphasis is wrong for many people only connect to God for what they can get from God, while we must connect so we might know and love the Son. God gives to us Christ, and Christ is everything we need.

It is important to note why Christ could say; “I am the resurrection.” He could say that because He passed through death and was resurrected. Anything that encounters death and survives is called resurrection. In Revelation 1:17-18 Christ says: “I am the living one; and I was dead and behold I am alive for ever more.”



Christ is a life that has come through death and therefore He is the resurrection and the life. Do you remember how it was that Christ revealed He has passed through death and come back alive? In John 20 when Thomas had doubted, the Lord asked him to reach hither with his finger and behold his hands and to reach hither with his finger and to thrust it into His side. Christ had the marks of death on him, the marks that said I died for you and have back from death into life for you.

What Christ has experienced in a spiritual way we all are to experience. As Christ physically passed through death we also pass through death spiritually. Only what passes through death and comes into life is resurrection and therefore gives out life. What is it that brings us to life? It is the work of the cross; it is the cross that brings death to all that we are. The cross, is the big eliminator, it is the big subtraction of our lives, for by it, everything you and I are, is eliminated and taken away, so that what is left is life, spiritual life, the Spirit of God in our spirit.

This is what every great man of God has experienced, they are able to give life, because they have been through death, there is nothing left of them and therefore what comes forth is Christ. "It is no longer I but Christ in me" and as Paul said: "I have no confidence in the flesh" and also that when he came to the Corinthians he came in weakness, fear and trembling because there was nothing in him that was useable. Passing through death always eliminates something, takes away something we might lean upon or trust: Strength, confidence, charm, eloquence, knowledge, power, harshness, control, and all the ability we might trust.

Paul said: "Death worketh in us but life in you."  
If we desire to be used of God to minister life to others we will have to have our time of death, our time of darkness for when we come through we will then bring forth life. This is so important and though we may have difficulty comprehending it, we will readily discern it. When a person who has passed through death speaks their words give forth life, we will sense it, we will perceive it, we will know we are receiving life. If a person who speaks has not passed through death, we will also know that for death is what we will sense.

## **“Christ and Christ alone”**

### **Lesson III**

J.W. Sims

As we continue our series we continue to point out that we need Christ, and when we have Christ we have everything we need. God does not give out to us various things for our needs, He gives out Christ and Christ is everything we need. I am righteous because He is righteous and therefore Christ is my righteousness. It is that we with everything I need. Christ is my forgiveness, Christ is my strength, Christ is my salvation, Christ is my health, Christ is my Holiness, Christ is my patience, and Christ is my peace, my wisdom and joy. What He is, is what we have for He never gives anything to anyone that is not Him. As we have said and continue to do so, we should not continue to pray for certain attributes that we think we need, but accept that because we have Christ these attributes are ours. How this raises our expectations, how this causes us to remove ourselves from praying for things to giving praise to God for all that we have in Christ, it simply changes our lives. It is no longer what you and I need, it is now all that you and I have in Christ Jesus.

When it comes to Christ what we are trying to express, teach and grasp is that Christ is God’s everything, He is the all inclusive one, in fact He alone is God’s center. We often think of the gifts and which one is it that we have without realizing that Christ is God’s gift and when we have Him we are gifted. We need to raise our eyes from the gift unto the giver of the gifts.

Jesus said in John 6:35 **“I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.”**

In John chapter five Christ had just performed miracles and as He went over the Sea of Galilee in Chapter 6 a great multitude followed Him. They followed Him because they saw the miracles He had performed and they therefore were curious and excited. In chapter 6 they became hungry and in verse 12 we learn that they were all filled by His miracle work. It is a good thing to be filled when you are hungry and to be fed by Christ is the best way to be filled. These folks kept on following Him and when He went over to Capernaum they got in their boats and went also. In verse 26 however, this is what Christ

said: “Verily, Verily, I say unto you, **“Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled.”** You see, it was not the spiritual they were interested in, but it was the physical. They were looking to Christ to meet their physical and materialistic needs rather than their spiritual needs. People are still like that today, in fact large ministries are being built around that very concept today, like what is it that I can get from God? We simply refer to it as the prosperity gospel.

This is why, in this chapter Christ makes such a bold statement and corrects our thinking; **“I am the bread of life, He that cometh unto me shall never hunger.”** Do not look to me to give you something, look to me to be something. It is not that I have come to give you bread, I have come to be your bread. I can only give to you what I am, and since I am the bread of life, I give you bread. If you are hungry you need me, it is not something I will give you, it is something I will be for you.

Now we have learned in these lessons: He reveals the way, because He is the way, He gives truth because He is truth, He gives life because He is life, and now He feeds us because He is bread. Christ is our food and to have Him is to have what we need for spiritual nourishment, for growth and for hunger. Bread fills us and because it does it brings satisfaction, and it is Christ alone that is our satisfaction. Food fills our emptiness, and nothing fills the emptiness of our hearts like Christ. Too many are looking in too many wrong places for their satisfaction, and because they are they will never be satisfied and will always be miserable. Many today have received Christ but they are not feeding upon Christ, they have allowed to many things in this world to be their food and because they have, even though they are believers they are hungry and empty inside. Christ alone is our replenishment, and refreshment no person, no church, no pastor and no retreat will ever bring what He is able to bring.

When we realize that Christ is the bread of life and is able to take care of our hunger and our thirst, then verse 53-58 makes perfect spiritual sense.

## **Baptism and Spiritual Growth**

### **Jerry W. Sims**

It is surprising to me just how un-educated the Church seems to be when it comes to a basic understanding of baptism. Many there are who know nothing concerning baptism. Others know things but things that are not necessarily Biblical.

There are, I believe two sides to teaching Baptism: One side being the Practical side and the other side being the Spiritual. In order to completely understand baptism it is important to understand both sides.

To begin with, being baptized does not save you. Baptism does not save you - only receiving Christ into your heart as your Savior saves you. Because you are saved, you will want to be baptized, but being baptized does not save you.

This is why a Biblical Church that understands the scripture never baptizes children. Children need to truly know the Lord and understand baptism before they are baptized. They need to know enough to have received Christ as their personal Savior; otherwise Baptism will do nothing for them.

If we baptize children thinking that that is necessary for salvation we will have thousands of people believing they are Spiritually just fine and on their way to Heaven, when they are not. In fact we often meet individuals with this opinion each day.

When Christ was hanging on the cross and a thief who was hanging on a cross next to him, exhibited faith in Luke 23:43 Christ said to him,

**"Today thou shalt be with me in paradise."**

Moments before death, a thief who received Christ was promised paradise. This thief had no opportunity to be baptized before his death and yet the Lord told him, "Today you will be with me".

In I Corinthians 1:17 Paul, the man who laid the foundation of Christ, who was responsible for bringing hundreds to Christ, as well as to maturity, said. **"For Christ did not send me to baptize but to preach the Gospel."**

If baptism were vital to a person's salvation would not the number one man, Paul's primary responsibility be to baptize people? Of course it would, but baptism is not essential to salvation, therefore it was not Paul's priority.

Please note: The Greek word for Baptism is Baptizo, which means to immerse or to submerge. There is no way that it can be a sprinkling of an individual. Their full dunking is implied.

Where then do people and churches get this false idea that you must be baptized to be saved and therefore must baptize children?

Mark 16:16

**"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved (out of the world): but he that disbelieves shall be condemned."**

No one has a right to change what this verse says; it is therefore essential that we understand what it says.

Generally, when we think of being saved, we do not understand it in its Biblical sense. We usually think of it as being saved from Hell, or being able to live forever with God. When the Bible speaks of salvation it means to be saved - or brought out of the World.

We are born into the World - Into a World system that is controlled by Satan. We need to be saved from it; we need to be taken out of it in a spiritual sense.

Remember what I John 2:15 says:

**"Love not the world neither the things that are in the world, for if anyone loves the world the love of the Father is not in him."**

2:17 also reads: **"And the world is passing away."**

As we see here, Christians and the world just don't go together. We've got to be taken out of it because it is going to end - it will not last forever.

In Galatians 1:3-4 we read concerning Christ:

**"Who gave himself for our sins to deliver us from this present evil world."**

The World system is contrary to the will and plan of God. It will end - it will be destroyed and everything within it. Therefore, God devised a way to take us out of it.

Something we don't often think about, because most people, even Christians want to be a part of the World. But did you realize that God's purpose was to save you from the World?

We are born into the World - We are born into what God calls, "Being born into Adam." No matter who we are or where we are from we are born into the human race - we are born into Adam.

The family of Adam is the wrong family - It is the worldly family. You can't remain in this family and go to Heaven. You must come out of the "Family of Adam" and come into the "Family of Christ."

Adam

Christ

The process of coming out of Adam and  
Into Christ is salvation. Salvation takes me  
From the wrong family and puts me into the right family.

The process of going from Adam to Christ  
Is what might be called being born-again?

How did we get into Adam? By birth. How then do we get out? By death.

Now we come to the heart of the whole lesson. Do we actually die? Of course not, in a way that is beyond our comprehension When Christ died He placed us all into that death.

All we are in Adam is worthless. We cannot be made to meet the standards of God. We cannot live the Christian life. There was only one thing that God could do with us - and that was to crucify us. The blessed message is this: Christ actually died but you and I only need only be baptized. We need only realize that all we were in Adam has been done away with - nailed to the cross, just like Christ was.

What do you do with something that is dead? That's right you bury it. When we are baptized we are recognizing that our old nature - that everything we were in Adam is gone - dead and therefore we are burying it. It is important to remember that when we bury a person we completely bury them. We would never consider sprinkling a little dirt over them and

considering them buried, no they must totally be buried out of sight. Therefore, complete immersion is necessary.

Baptism is an outward expression that I have died - that all my self-centeredness has been dealt with by the Cross.

Baptism is a public declaration to the World that I am no longer a part of it but that I am now out of Adam and into Christ.

Baptism is you and I recognizing and declaring that God has taken us out of this world.

Baptism declares that I am saved from the World and now belong to the Kingdom.

Baptism says that I am separated from the World that I have come out from it.

Baptism does not save me, but rather is me declaring that I am saved.

I believe that Baptism places you and I into a position where we can begin to grow in the Lord and in the Holy Spirit. We have now confessed God before the World, declaring that we belong to Him and His Kingdom.

We are declaring to God and to the World Galatians 2:20

**"It is no longer I but Christ that liveth in me."**

The waters of Baptism become the tomb for our old sinful nature. We bury it and leave it there. We then come up out of the waters to walk in the newness of life that is in Christ. Down with the Old man and up with the new man.

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Romans chapter 6 gives to us our greatest Biblical foundation concerning the spiritual significance of Baptism.

It is a chapter that we should read over and over again asking the Lord to assist us in our understanding.

It is not a matter of whether we understand Romans 6 or not, because that does not affect its truth. What Romans 6 records here, has taken place for every believer. The problem is however, many of us, have not been properly taught and therefore don't understand. Not having been

properly taught however does not change these truths. What has here been recorded is a spiritual truth. In a way that is beyond our comprehension: When Christ died, everything we are in our sinful nature died with Him. Baptism is recognizing that I have been dealt with. Everything I was could never be improved; it could never be made good enough. Therefore, God just took it away nailed it to a cross, and all I have to do is to recognize this and allow myself to be baptized. Spiritually I am burying what God says has died.

That's why verse 3 says:

**"As many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus  
Were baptized into His death."**

Our Baptism has spiritually taken place - we have been buried in His death. Now by this public Baptism I acknowledge and declare it.

Verse 4 takes us from the death side to the  
Life side; from being buried, to being raised with Him.

**"Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death that like as Christ  
was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also  
should walk in newness of life."**

**V.5 "United together in the likeness of His death, in the likeness of  
His resurrection."**

Baptism declares not only that our old nature has been dealt with, has died, but also that we have been raised to a newness of life, Colossians 3:1-3.

Once again remember Galatians 2:20:

**"I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I  
Who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life I now  
Live in the flesh I live by faith."**

Without question, spiritually speaking everything that needs to be done for you and I to have victory has been done. The "old man" that "carnal nature" or "fleshy nature" in you and I has been dealt with by the cross as far as God is concerned. Spiritually it is done.

The practical side of this in our daily lives however, takes years. It takes many experiences; it takes the working of the Holy Spirit in our lives.



Finally, in this chapter are some important truths that will assist us in experiencing the joy of Baptism as well as victory in our lives. They are three in number and each need to be applied.

#### **V.6 "Knowing this"**

This is where it starts for us. We need a Revelation of our death. We need to know that the old nature has been dealt with.

When we experience this we will stop trying to live the Christian life according to our own ability. We will acknowledge our death and rest in His resurrection life.

#### **V.11 "Reckon yourself to be dead indeed to sin but alive unto God"**

If God says my old sinful nature is dead than I am going to reckon it so. I am going to account it so. This is an accounting work.

$2+2 = 4$ , it can equal no less or no more. God says your old nature is dead and I account it just as I account  $2+2=4$ . It is just as much a fact, no matter what anyone tries to tell me, no matter what the enemy whispers in my ear.

Therefore, by physical baptism I am going to reckon it so.

#### **V.13 "Presenting yourself."**

Now we are ready to present ourselves. What we present is not the old nature of course, but the new nature that is created in Christ Jesus. Now we can begin to walk in the joy of the Lord as well as victory. We must remember there is no such thing as instant victory; it is a working process of the Holy Spirit through us.

Therefore, throughout the years greater victory will become ours.

Though I believe anyone receiving baptism needs to have these truths presented to him or her, I also believe that it takes years of the Lord working in our lives and teaching us for us to truly understand and experience the reality of these truths in our lives.

## **“Abraham’s journey”**

J. W. Sims

One of the beautiful things concerning the Word of God is that its truths are hidden unless revealed by the Holy Spirit. For the student who is willing to rely upon the Spirit there are many wonderful truths to be enriched by. When we study the Word we must remember that every phrase and every word can have significant spiritual meaning that we can profit from. This is very true as we learn the significance of the names of places where Abraham first traveled as he came into the promised land.

1. He is first seen in the Ur of Chaldees, a place meaning “light or brightness.” This light however was representative of a false light; for it was there that they worshipped the “moon god” and therefore was a place of idolatry, a place that had no knowledge of God. Acts 7:2-4 and Genesis 11:31.
2. Secondly, rather than traveling directly to the Promised Land as God Desired, Abram stopped in Haran. There could be many reasons for this that we do not understand but none of them exhibit the kind of faith he will later be known for. Perhaps he was not anxious to carry out the Lord’s will, perhaps he was afraid, and perhaps he was slow. When we look at Genesis chapter 11 we discover that even though Abram was to lead and to leave his father’s family, his father actually did the leading. Whatever the cause, we believe that five years of time were lost here by God and by Abram. The name Haran can mean dryness, and spiritual dryness is just about all that was accomplished here. We all have Harans in our lives, times when we are not moving, times when we are not progressing in regard to our spiritual lives or service to the Lord. Harans can come into our lives but they must not remain; it is one thing to spend some time in a Haran but it is another to spend a lifetime there. When you learn the way that men would travel from Ur to the land where Abraham was going you will see that Haran was just about halfway, that’s right, Abraham went just about half-way with God. How many of us there are who are only willing to go halfway with God instead of all the way, Genesis 11:27-32. It is important to remember that Abram remained in Haran until his father died the father who was not supposed to be there, who Abram allowed to come along was hindering what Abram was supposed to be doing for God. How careful we must each be to let go of those things and even people who may be preventing us from carrying on the work of God for our lives? After he died in Genesis 12:1-4 we see that Abram again heard the voice of God as He told him once again to get out of his country. Now that means for approximately five years we have no record of God even speaking to Abram, and that is just the way it is when we are in a Haran, we often do not hear the voice of God.

3. Next we see in Genesis 12:6 that Abram stops in a place called Shechem meaning “shoulder” or a place of strength. At this place in Shechem is a terebinth tree or a tree like a strong oak at Moreh meaning a hill. Now we have Abram finally getting to where he needs to get, for now we see a strong tree, a hill and a place that means strength. All of this is showing to us that the Word of God is rich and its message beyond what most of us generally receive. When you and I are on the path where God wants us it is always a path of strength, of being on a hill where we can see, and thus being as strong as an oak. Why else might all this be true? Because it was here that Abram builds an altar and worships God. Whenever you and I take time to meet with God and build an altar of worship we know good things are going to happen.
  
4. Now in Genesis 12:8 we see that Abram moves. When you are being led by God to work in His ministry there will be times you will have to move. The key is moving when He leads you and staying put when He does not. This time Abram pitches a tent, something we did not see last time and probably has a great deal of spiritual meaning for us. He is pitching his tent between Bethel and Ai; Bethel means “The house of God” while Ai means “A heap of ruin.” When Abram was turned toward Bethel, toward God, his back was toward the world and his past life. It is the same for all of the Lord’s children, either we turn toward God or we turn toward the heap of ruin, the world and all it offers. Building an altar and pitching our tent toward God is certainly what we all need to find stability, joy and peace. Notice also, however that this time we see that he called upon the Lord. Almost like there has been some kind of spiritual progression, like he was growing closer to the Lord than he had ever been. It would seem that staying here would be the best thing for Abram to do. Life however can cause us to make changes and sometimes go to places where we should not go.
  
4. Now in verse 9 we see that Abram journeyed, going on still toward the South. Did he receive any leading from God to do this? We cannot see that he did and because of the results of this move we can assume he is making a mistake once again. Abram is much like you and I, we love the Lord, we try to do what we should do, but often we make wrong decisions, and go wrong places. Abram had been in a place that we would assume is the perfect place for peace and spiritual prosperity but he simply does not stay there and now in verse 10 life itself brings an additional problem. “Now there was a famine in the land, and Abram went down to Egypt to dwell there, for the famine was severe in the land.” When we go places we should not go, when we do things we should not do, a famine is sure to come. In Haran it was a place of dryness, now even in the Promised Land we have a famine. It is never good when we are not where God wants us. We know from our look at the map that Abram must be in the Negev, and the Negev is a desert and clearly

reminds us of dryness once again. We cannot help but identify with Abram and what he experiences because we all have at times experienced the same thing, often going from a Bethel of richness with God to an experience in the Negev that brings dryness into our hearts. Abram however, goes to the world for help, for he goes down into Egypt.

Now that this famine is here Abram can either remain and trust God for help, or he can move on down into Egypt where he can find help from man. This is the problem of being where we should not be, for when you go there we might trust in ourselves and in the world rather than God. Please notice that he **“went down”** into Egypt because the path that Abram was taking was down spiritually and certainly not up. It may not seem so bad to you and I for Abram to go down into Egypt but Egypt was not God’s land and it was not where God wanted Abram to go. Please look at Isaiah 31:1 to see God’s opinion of Egypt.

**“Woe to those who go down to Egypt for help, and rely on horses, who trust in chariots because they are many, and in horsemen because they are very strong, but who do not look to the Holy One of Israel, nor seek the Lord.”**

As you can see, for someone to go down into Egypt as far as God was concerned was to trust in Egypt and its power rather than to trust God. Abram and we ourselves must learn to be where God wants us to be and to trust Him when a famine comes into our lives rather than trust in man or anything this world offers to us.

When Abram went down into Egypt he realized he was coming to a place where men were not what they should be and he therefore came up with a plan as to how he would speak of his wife as his sister rather than his wife. The reason he has to do this is because he is not where he should be and he is not willing to trust in God. How much we are like our father Abram, often not where we belong and often not willing to trust in our Lord.

Now finally after being where he should not be and doing things he should not do we find that he gets back to where he should have never left.

5. **Genesis 13:1 “Then Abram went up from Egypt, he and his wife and all that he had, and Lot with him to the South.”** Notice again how the Holy Spirit makes it clear that “he came back up.” When we move from God we go down but when we move toward God and His will we always go up.

**V.3 “And he went on his journey from the South as far as Bethel, to the place where his tent had been at the beginning, between Bethel**

**and Ai V.4 to the place of the altar which he had made there at first. And it was there Abram called on the name of the Lord.”**

What blessed truth is here for us, sometimes when we have gone a wrong direction and not done what God desired us to do, we simply have to get back to where we were and so Abram goes back to the “House of God” where he again sets up his altar and again calls upon the Lord. How blessed and encouraging this is for us all, to realize that though we sin and fail we can always return, and this is what Abram wonderfully shows to us all in this most dramatic and physical way.

## **“Abraham, chosen of God”**

J.W. Sims

As we learned in our introduction, Abraham is God's choice; by Abraham it is the desire of God to bring forth a people for Himself. Through Adam was everything lost, but now through Abraham will everything be recovered. Abraham will truly pave the way for the redeemer, Christ. By Abraham will God begin to show to us all that salvation will only be by faith, Romans 4:11.

### The Calling:

When we read the Word we must always be careful to compare scripture with scripture, to make sure there are not other verses that may give us light concerning the subject we are studying. When it comes to the calling of Abraham this is one of the things we must carefully do or we will not receive a complete picture.

If we are studying Abraham the natural thing to do is begin our study with Genesis chapter twelve where we first see his calling. If however, we do this we will think God while in Haran first called him and this is not true.

**“Now the Lord had said to Abram: Get out of your country, from your family and from your father's house, to a land that I will show you. I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”**

As we see from this passage it appears that God did call him out of Haran, the only problem is that this is not true, for when we read Acts 7:2-4 this is what we see:

**“And he said brethren and fathers, listen: The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamian, before he dwelt in Haran, and said, get out of your country and from your relatives and come to a land that I will show you, then he came out of the land of the Chaldean and dwelt in Haran, and from here, when his father was dead He moved him to this land in which you now dwell.”**

Yes, Abraham was not called from Haran but from the Ur of Chaldees, a place of idolatry, a place that did not worship or acknowledge God. When he was called he was asked to leave his brethren, his father's people and the only country he knew. Now you would think that if a man experienced God's presence and calling he would immediately do what God asked him. When however we compare this passage with Genesis 11 and 12 we begin to realize

that even with Abraham there were many problems when it came to his obedience unto the Lord.

The first thing we learn is that Abraham did not go directly from the Chaldees to the Promised Land but only went to Haran. Based upon the map and how people traveled from the Chaldees to Israel, Abraham went about halfway with God. What a spiritual truth we learn here, how many do you think go half way with God? God calls us all the way, but how often we drag our feet and waste His time. Arthur pink tells us that the approximate waste of time was five years.

When we look at Genesis 11 we also see something very strange and that is in verse 31 we read: "Terah took his son Abram and his grandson Lot, ...from Ur of the Chaldean to go to the land of Canaan and they came to Haran and dwelt there." Even though God called Abraham to leave his country and family it is Terah the father who led. How is it that the one who is not called is leading the one who is called? May the Lord help us all, for Abraham is not to have his father, nor Lot with him, and his father is even leading out Abraham. I expect that Abraham was not cooperating with God and in some unique way God stirred the heart of his father to do what he would not do. Lot who also is there will only lead to problems and hardship simply because he was never suppose to be there. It is interesting to note that Haran means "parched" for when you and I are not doing what the Lord wants us to do nor are we where He wants us to be there is no spiritual riches nor water, only dryness. The name Terah also seems to imply dryness therefore it becomes quite clear that in a spiritual sense not much good took place in Haran.

While Abraham was in Haran for this possible five years there is no sign that God ever spoke to Abraham. He has been called out and by God's grace he moves out but God does not speak to him until his father who is not supposed to be there dies. How often this is the way it is in our lives, sometimes there is simply something in our lives that has broken or relationship and prevented us from carrying out His will. Now however, the work can continue, so now we read that again God comes to Abraham to carry out what He had called him to carry out.

Abraham, we must remember is a new person in regard to the things of the Lord. He knows nothing for he is yet simply a baby therefore we need to be gentle concerning his present situation. Many who know more of the Lord than Abraham are still stuck in Haran, they have never come out and carried on the work that He gave them to do. Secondly along with all of this allow us to see the extreme patience, endurance and gentleness that God has with Abraham. How He wonderfully waits on us His children as we move slowly, improperly, and even when we do not move at all.

We must remember all he has been asked to do, to leave family friend, and country to go to a place where he does not even know. How many of us

would be willing to do such a thing in mid life? For as Genesis 12:4 tells us he was seventy-five years old when he left Haran.

When God speaks of all of this in Hebrews 11:8 we read: **“By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going.”**

Therefore, in spite of all we have seen about him, the bottom line is that what he did he did by faith; he left not knowing where it was he was going. This ought to be encouraging to us all for like Abraham we have our problems, but basically by His grace, through faith and God we get to where He wants us to be.



## **“Abraham’s children”**

J.W. Sims

Now thirteen years after Abraham and his wife moved in their flesh to accomplish and to bring forth what they could no longer wait upon the Father for, the promised child will come. God will not accept what came forth from man, but could only accept what came forth by a miracle work of His Spirit. Things have not changed that much in spite of what we might think, for all genuine spiritual work today must be of the spiritual kind not of the fleshy kind, all ministry must be of the Isaac kind and not the Ishmael kind. In Genesis 17 we find that all who were in the house of Abraham were circumcised to honor the covenant of God. Ishmael was thirteen years of age but Abraham was ninety-nine years old when he was circumcised.

After this confirmed experience that God would truly give Abraham a son by the name of Isaac, after grand and rich experiences with God, at a time when we would believe that Abraham had truly come into full maturity we find that again he disappoints God and does not trust him. In Genesis twenty we read: “And Abraham journeyed from there to the South, and dwelt between Kadesh and Shur, and stayed in Gerar. Now Abraham said of Sara his wife, she is my sister, and Abimelech king of Gerar sent and took Sarah. Kadesh represents desert, Shur represents desert, and Gerar though it is a place of rolling hills was apparently an ancient city toward Egypt. So once again we see Abraham heading in a direction they he should not be heading and the end result will be the same sin he committed the first time he did this. The message to us is simple, we are each prone toward particular sins and when we do not trust the Lord and move in the same old direction we like Abraham commit the same old sin. Anyone who is a Christians knows the frustrating truth of this struggle in his or her life. This time God has to intervene to protect a king who would have been destroyed by the judgment of God if He had not. Obviously Abraham was not giving forth a good testimony here but by God’s grace he and Sarah financially were enriched from King Abimelech and Abraham prayed for Abimelech that God would again open the wombs of the women that they might again become pregnant. In spite of God’s children and what they do, God always honors His children.

Finally in Chapter twenty-one the grand and wonderful day comes. Notice please that when Isaac finally comes that Sarah is happy to call her son Isaac for she now truly laughs but no with doubt but with pure joy. “And Sarah said, God has made me laugh, and all who hear will laugh with me. She also said, who would have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse children? For I have borne him a son in his old age.”

V. 8 “So the child grew and was weaned, and Abraham made a great feast on the same day that Isaac was weaned. V.9 And Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, whom she had borne to Abraham scoffing.”

From the time of Isaac's weaning and the time that Ishmael turned thirteen troubles between the two began. Ishmael and Isaac can never go together for between them their will never be oneness for they are truly light and darkness flesh and spirit. Therefore, even when Isaac was a small baby Ishmael started mocking him, and making fun of him, and ever since the Arabs have been doing the same to Israel. Since Galatians 4:27-31 makes it clear that Ishmael is from the flesh and a slave while Isaac is from the Spirit and represents spirit we see a beautiful lesson at how flesh and spirit can never go together. Those who are of the flesh mock those who are of the Spirit, the battle of the flesh and spirit within each of us is a powerful and demanding battle all of our lives. Therefore, in Genesis twenty-one verse ten we read: "Therefore, she said to Abraham, cast out this bondwoman and her son; for the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son, namely with Isaac." Yes, these two can simply not go together, flesh and spirit can never be one, and so they must separate. How true this is for flesh and spirit will always spilt families for nothing brings oneness like being one in the Spirit.

V.11 "And the matter was very displeasing in Abraham's sight because of his son. V.12 But God said to Abraham, do not let it be displeasing in your sight because of the lad or because of your bondwoman, whatever Sarah has said to you, listen to her voice; for in Isaac your seen shall be called."

Whatever we do, whatever we produce in our flesh is always precious to us whether or not it is too God. Abraham was attached to Ishmael and when his wife said this child has to go, it very much displeased Abraham. The fact that he was displeased means that he was grieved over this to the point that he was breaking into pieces. It was not something he wanted to do but God Himself came to him and said: "Listen to your wife." There was a time when Adam was in trouble for listening to his wife and a time early when Abraham was in trouble because he listened to his wife but now God says listen to your wife. You see when your wife is spiritually correct in here thinking you had better listen to her for that is why the Lord gave her to you.

V.13 "Yet I will also make a nation of the son of the bondwoman, because he is your seed." How marvelous is God toward His children, that even when they are wrong He will still bless and honor them, perhaps not like we desire but He still will be very gracious.

V.14 "So Abraham rose early in the morning, and took bread and a skin of water; and putting it on her shoulder, he gave it and the boy to Hagar, and sent her away. Then she departed and wandered in the wilderness of Beersheba."

What Abraham is doing he does not want to do but having been directed by God He does not balk but rises early to carry out the will of God. How few rise early today especially when it involves carrying out the will of God that you do not even want to carry out?

Poor Hagar, this is the place she has come the place of being sent away of being discarded through no fault of her own. How many Hagers there are in our world, who have been used, misused and abused by men who through no fault of their own become cast always, simply because like Hagar they are bondservants rather than genuine children of the Lord. Abraham did however give her a little something to carry her through for a little while: He gave her some bread and a little skin of water and soon we find her wandering around in the wilderness. How many there are who wander around in the wilderness of our world. Would to God that by His grace and direction we could find those who are wandering and suffering through thirst in the wilderness of the world.

V.15 “And the water in the skin was used up, and she placed the boy under one of the shrubs. V.16 Then she went and sat down across from him at a distance of about a bowshot; for she said to herself, let me not see the death of the boy. So she sat opposite him, and lifted her voice and wept.”

Worldly water in a desert does not last very long so soon it was gone, and soon she had a child that was dying of thirst. Hagar represents a wonderful loving mother here, she did not ask for any of this, but now she has no home, is in a desert wilderness with a dying child and she can take it no longer. She places her child some distance from her under a shrub so that he can have some shade while he slowly dies, and then she lifts up her voice and weeps.

V.17 “And God heard the voice of the lad. Then the angel of God called to Hagar out of heaven, and said to her, what ails you, Hagar? Fear not, for God has heard the voice of the lad where he is. V.18 Arise, lift up the lad and hold him with your hand, for I will make him a great nation.”

How wonderful that when Ishmael cries, having a name that literally means: God hears “God hears” his cry. How wonderful is the grace of God? Just think if God was not gracious He could have allowed this fleshy seed of Abraham to die of thirst and the problem would be gone, but He does not for He even expresses that he will become a great nation would could even mean mighty as well as a loud nation. Sure Ishmael will bring devastation to Israel through the years, but it was still the initial grace of God that allowed him to live. Within the loving grace of God He tells Hagar to lift up her child and hold him, so we see that even what eventually brought for the Arab nation began with the gentle love of a mother.

V.19 “Then God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water. And she went and filled the skin with water, and gave the lad a drink. So God was with the lad; and he grew and dwelt in the wilderness, and became an archer. V.21 He dwelt in the wilderness of Paran; and his mother took a wife for him from the land of Egypt.”

So here we are once again seeing the grace, love and mercy of our Father, who will provide even for the Ishmael that has been produced. Notice please that He

opened her eyes so that she could see a well of water. This implies that perhaps the water was there all of the time but she just could not see it. I wonder how many times when we are struggling for an answer when we are in need of provision that God's provision is before us and it is just that we have no spiritual eyes to see it? Perhaps more than we imagine. Ishmaels are not God's will and they are never God's best but when we are His children He is yet able to provide even though there will be consequences. Notice please that the child grew and dwelt in the wilderness a desert place. Ishmaels do not pass through a desert wilderness like the Lord's children do they dwell there all of their lives, never finding richness, and fruitfulness but always remaining spiritually dry, and unproductive, that is why producing Ishmaels is so dangerous, so fleshy and so inadequate for the test of time and the building up of the Kingdom of God.

## **“Abraham and his children”**

J. W. Sims

As we learned in our previous lesson Abraham like us simply could not wait upon God, his patience had worn away, and he decided that God needed his help to bring forth the promised child. Sarai came up with a plan and Abram accepted it and the end result was a child of the flesh that would forever be a thorn in the side of Israel. As the Lord's children we must learn to wait upon Him, to trust in His way and what is His plan for our lives, if we do not, like Abram we will in our flesh bring forth Ishmaels that will forever create problems for us in our lives and in our ministries. I believe that Ishmael represents more than just a child that has come into the world but represents a working of the flesh that we produce when we do not wait upon God but serve Him by our knowledge, skills and talent, therefore I believe the Church is full of Ishmael ministries. The wonderful thing about all of this is that God named him and gave him a name that means: “God hears,” so even with the fleshy work that Abram produced, God is gracious and loving. And as we pointed out in our last lesson He wonderfully revealed His grace to Hagar in the wilderness and she named the place: “you are the God who sees” therefore, grace and compassion is seen everywhere from God, nevertheless however their will still be consequences.

Genesis 17: 1 “When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to Abram and said to him, I am almighty God, walk before me and be blameless. And I will make my covenant between me and you, and will multiply you exceedingly, then Abram fell on his face, and God talked with him saying:”

This chapter sets before us a wonderful experience that Abram has with God, a restored promise of the coming child, even a name change takes place here that is dramatic for Abram becomes Abraham and therefore we have him taken from what meant a high father to a father of a multitude. Like Abraham Sarai will have a name change also for she will no longer be called Sarai but Sarah.

V.16 “ And I will bless her and also give you a son by her; then I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations; kings of people shall be from her V.17 The Abraham fell on his face and laughed, and said in his heart, shall a child be born to a man who is one hundred years old? And shall Sarah who is ninety years old, bear a child? V.18 And Abraham said to God, Oh, that Ishmael might live before you.”

For some reason we always remember that Sarah laughed but forget that Abraham laughed. Abraham laughed because he simply could not believe that at ninety-nine years old he could produce a child, and besides he would be one hundred when the child arrived. Now we must remember at this point that Abraham must be giving up on any possibility of receiving the blessing of God that he was told would come, he simply does not believe that what God said would happen will happen. Therefore, he cries out to God, “O that Ishmael might

live before you.” By this Abraham without realizing it is saying please God accept what I did in the flesh as the means by which all your blessing will come. How outrageous that Abraham would expect that God could take his lack of faith and fleshy act as the means of producing a promised child, as the means of genuine ministry. Yet thousands of people in the ministry today ask just that, they cannot trust God to do a spiritual work through them so they do it themselves by their own fleshiness and then ask God to bless it. Just Like Abraham and they are saying, “O God please, use my fleshy work as your way of blessing the Church and saving people.” And what does God say? V.19 “No, Sarah your wife shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac; I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his descendants after him”

Sorry dear friends no matter how sincere we are we can do nothing for God, we can build not ministry, we can bring no one to the Lord, for the work is His. Sure we can produce an Ishmael we he will never be the spiritual work of God for as we learn in Galatians Isaac represents the spirit but Ishmaels always represents the flesh.

We might ask why did God wait so long, why would He expect a young Christian like Abraham to wait what will now be twenty five years before what He told him would come, would finally come? What is God waiting on? For our answer we need to turn to Romans 4:19 “and not being weak in faith, he did not consider his own body, already dead (since he was about a hundred years old), and the deadness of Sarah’s womb, He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God.”

We must carefully think on what is being said here, and that is that Abraham’s body as well as Sarah’s was for all practical purposes dead in regard to being able to have a child. Why did God wait? God was waiting so that it would be impossible for Abraham to have a child, so it would not be possible for him to in any way have a part with the promised child Isaac. A miracle ministry of God would only do what was being done here and man could have no part in it. This is what God is expressing to us all when it come to ministry, He does not want what we can do through our work but only what He does through us, He does not want Ishmaels for He wants only Isaac’s He wants only what comes through us by His Spirit, so that He only will be glorified and so that what comes for is that which is spiritual and not fleshy.

In addition to this we must remember when it comes to our lives as well as all ministry God’s timing is always perfect, He is not early and He is not late for in Genesis 21:1-2 we read: “And the Lord visited Sarah as He had said, and the Lord did for Sarah as He had spoken. For Sarah conceived and born Abraham a son in his old age, at the set time of which God had spoken to him.” There it is Sarah conceived and gave birth at the set time of God. Why can we not understand as Christians that our Father knows exactly what He is doing in our lives? We fret and worry and complain because something is not happening right now, when right now just is simply not the right time for God or for us. May help us to understand this and to keep us from producing Ishmaels because we

just cannot wait upon Him. So God gives to Abraham a son who shall be named laughter, what a name? Perhaps given because both he and Sarah laughed at the prospect of God giving to them a Son in their old age and yet from God's perspective because he would be and bring joy for by him would the foundation be laid for Israel. Now we have what God wanted to bring but guess what? He has a thirteen-year old brother who has come before him who will ever be a problem. Abraham has brought a child into the world that will forever hate and destroy Israel for now the Arabs will ever haunt God's people Israel.

## **“Abrahams, Lots and the judgment of God”**

J.W. Sims

As this lesson continues we will turn to Genesis eighteen and Genesis nineteen where we will given information that makes a clear difference between the Abrahams and the Lots in our world.

We must remember that the judgment of God is coming because of the wickedness of Sodom, and Lot who is right in the middle of Sodom and Abraham who is in the rural area are about to receive visitors.

In Genesis 18:1 we see Abraham sitting in the door of his tent a place of rest in the heat of the day. Abraham is where he should be as these three divine beings come to him.

In Genesis 19:1 however we see that Lot is sitting in the gate of Sodom. Unlike Abraham Lot is where it is happening, he has come from being close to Sodom, to living in Sodom and now even to a position in Sodom as sitting at the gate was reserved for key people.

Notice please though the Divine beings come to Abraham in the heat of the day, a time of light, when they come to Lot they come in the evening, this not only wonderfully reveals the difference in their spiritual lives but also reveals that the Lord has come to Abraham for fellowship and instruction but for Lot He has come for judgment.

As you continue please note Abraham has three visitors while Lot only has two. If these are Divine beings who is missing? Could it be that because of the condition of Lot's life the person of the Holy Spirit is simply not able to be there, for Lot has grieved the Holy Spirit from his life.

Now as we continue let us note the different attitude that Abraham has from lot as he receives these Divine beings.

V.2 “So he lifted his eyes and looked, and behold, three men were standing by him; and when he saw them, he ran from the tent door to meet them, and bowed himself to the ground. V.3 and said, My Lord, if I have now found favor in your sight, do not pass on by your servant.”

Abraham lifted up his eyes, looked and beheld three me and he immediately realized the significance of them, and he was immediately enthused and therefore ran from the tent door to meet them, bowed down before them and asked them to not pass on; such joy, discernment and enthusiasm.

Now look at Lot who simply rose to meet them, no real discernment or enthusiasm just simply a rising, and a bowing. As we continue in verse two however we do see that he invited them to spend the night. Notice how he referred himself to them as a servant. Notice how even though Abraham was in



a tent, ever ready to go where the Lord led him to go, Lot had already gotten himself a house to dwell in the middle of Sodom.

## **“A lot of Lots”**

J.W. Sims

As you will remember Abraham was called out from the Ur of Chaldees, from a place of idolatry to a place that God would show him. He was told to leave his home and his family, however Abraham did not fully obey God. He went with his father and his nephew, and therefore his father held him up for five years in Haran and Lot would continue to be a thorn in his side for several years. The problem for our study is first seen in Genesis 12:4 “So Abram departed as the Lord had spoken to him, and Lot went with him.”

Therefore, Lot will always represents someone in Abraham’s life that should not be there. Abraham is attached to and responsible for someone who God did not want to be in Abraham’s life, consequently he will always be a problem for Abraham, a spiritual drain on Abraham’s spiritual life. Therefore, from Abraham’s allowing Lot to be with can teach all of us the importance of not having attachments with people the Lord does not want us to be attached to.

When it comes to Abraham he was God’s choice, in spite of his problems he was a God fearing man who God was going to use. When however, it came to Lot there just was not the same calling nor was they’re the same spiritual quality. Everything Abraham had, he had directly from God, but everything Lot had he only had because he received it thru or because he was attached to Abraham. He was a Christian, as we will see later but only seemed to know God in a second hand way and therefore was never rich spiritually and did very little for the Kingdom of God.

Lots are a real problem because they take a lot from solid spiritual Christians but they do not give anything back. They take but never give, they never give spiritually, the never give financially and they never give to the development of someone else’s spiritual life. They simply are always takers and never givers, their view of the Christian life is a view of themselves rather than others and because of this the Lots are always draining the Abraham’s in the Church. These Lots never do well and unless they truly surrender to the Lord they can never make it on their own, they always have to depend upon an Abraham, they always have to get their spiritual food second hand and like Lot they always move into wrong directions causing Abraham to come and retrieve them.

The first time we see a real problem between Abraham and Lot is in Genesis thirteen when through the blessing of God Abraham and Lot begin to be rich. Is it not interesting that the first time we really begin to see riches in Genesis we also see problem between two relatives? In verse two Abram was rich and in verse five Lot who went with Abram had herds and flocks and tents and together the land just could not support them. The land could not handle both of them because both of them are not supposed to be there, only one of

them. Therefore, as verse six says they could not dwell together, well isn't that funny since God had known that a long time before? In verse seven the obvious problem came and it was strife between Abrams herdsmen and Lot's.

This is important now for we find that it is the God fearing man Abraham who works to deal with the problem, for in verse eight we read: "So Abram said to Lot, please let there be no strife between you and me, and between my herdsmen and your herdsmen, for we are brethren." Though all the land has been given to Abram and he can live anywhere he chooses he gives Lot first choice; that is just the way an Abram who trusts God is. V.9 "Is not the whole land before you? Please separate from me. If you take the left, then I will go the right; or, if you go to the right, then I will go to the left."

V.10 "And Lot lifted up his eyes and saw all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered everywhere before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah like the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt as you go toward Zoar."

Please notice that Lot makes a selfish, self-centered choice, he chooses the best of the land, and he uses his eyes and not his faith, for the scripture says that we should live our lives by faith not by sight. This however, is one of the problems with the Lots of our world; they always are self centered and they are always making their decisions on what they see not on their trust of the Lord. So in verse eleven we read: "Then Lot chose for himself all the plain of Jordan, and Lot journeyed east, and they separated from each other." Please note that he chose for himself and that he chose all of the plain; poor Lot he just had to make his choices in life and he just had to get as much as he could. Unlike Lot Abraham just simply trusted God, you see he did not have to even make a choice because he knew that God had already given to him all of the land. How nice it is to simply lean upon the Lord in rest in Him to give you what He has promised.

V.12 "Abram dwelt in the land of Canaan, and Lot dwelt in the cities of the plain and pitched his tent even as far as Sodom."

How serious is this for it reveals the heart of Lot, Lot pitched his tent in the cities of the plain even as far as Sodom. While Abraham continued to dwell in the rural areas where a man could meet with and know God, Lot pitched his tent so close to Sodom that he was just about there. How clear the message is to us concerning the spiritual condition of Lot, for he was a worldly Christian who wanted to be near all that the city and the world offers. Lot is a Christian yes, but O how much of his heart is interested in what the world offers. Do you know any Lots, sure they love the Lord but they have to have the bright lights and the entertainment that this world offers and so they have to be toward the city and not toward the country. And what a city it was for we read in verse thirteen: "But the men of Sodom were exceedingly wicked and sinful against the Lord." What a city? A city that is full of wickedness, a city of lust and homosexuality, but a city that Lot wanted to be close to. How careful we must be, to work on being an Abraham rather than a Lot.

V.14 “And the Lord said to Abram, after Lot had separated from him: lift your eyes now and look from the place where you are northward, southward, eastward, and westward; for all the land which you see I give to you and your descendants forever.” How interesting it is that as soon as Abram and Lot separated that God speaks? If you will remember we also saw this happen after Terah died, so it does point out to us how important it is to be doing what the Lord wants us to do if we are expecting to hear His voice. Again, also notice that Abram need not concern himself with where Lot goes because God has given to him the land forever.

After this in verse eighteen we find that Abraham has moved his tent and now is in Mamre, where he builds an altar and of course fellowship with and worships the Lord. Lot however, is not long in causing problems for our spiritual man, because even though Lots go away they always seem to come back and when they come back they always have a problem. In Genesis 14 we see that there is a serious problem developing between certain kings and there is going to be a battle involving Sodom. You of course can see the handwriting on the wall for our man Lot is going to be right in the middle of it. That is just the way Lots are they manage to be where they should not be, always getting themselves into difficulty causing the Abraham's to once again rescue them.

In verse twelve we see something very interesting for there we read: “They also took Lot, Abram's brother's son who dwelt in Sodom, and his goods, and departed.” Do you remember where he first moved? That is right, he first moved toward Sodom but now he is in Sodom. This is the problem with Christians who have not yet removed themselves from the world, when they get close they so easily can simply get right in there and live. This is why we must be careful to remain an Abraham to stay in the rural place with God instead of the worldly city that men have made, because when we do so there will always be trouble. So now there is not only trouble for Lot but also trouble for Abraham for now because Lot is a brother, Abram will have to go and rescue him and bring him out from the clutches of the enemy. Notice please that according to verse fourteen Abraham is quite ready and prepared to do what he needs to do.

V.16 “So he brought back all the goods, and also brought back his brother Lot and his goods, as well as the women and the people.” How sad that the Church is full of Lots, but thank God for Abraham's who are ready and prepared to deliver them. Lots are always going where they should not go and settling where they should not settle therefore their eyes are always in trouble and they are always in need of deliverance.

One of the concerns that I have concerning Lots is that they often are out there trying to bring people to the Lord, for after all they are Christians, but the problem with this is that Lots produce Lots. Since Lots produce Lots this simply becomes a growing problem and so the Church becomes full of Lots and over

the years certain ministries can be weakened by the constant need to care for, please and work to bail the Lots out of one problem after another.

## **“Contending for the faith”**

J. W. Sims

In a little book of the Bible called Jude we have a very powerful message concerning the kind of men that we should be on our guard for in these latter days. We will not in this lesson deal with these men and everything we should be on our guard for. Verse 3 and 4 however demand our attention as we think on the things that are happening in the present day church.

**“Dear friends, although I was very eager to write to you about the salvation we share, I felt I had to write and urge you to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints, for certain men whose condemnation was written about long ago have secretly slipped in among you. They are godless men, who change the grace of our God into a license for immorality and deny Jesus Christ our sovereign and Lord.”**

Jude wanted to simply speak concerning the riches of salvation but he felt he had to urge them to contend for the faith, he felt he had to urge them to earnestly struggle and strive to make sure the faith was kept the way in which it had been entrusted to them. This most certainly is a truth for our day, for there is much connected to the church that is simply off center that is drawing us away from the simplicity of Christ. The problem, even back in the time of Jude was with men who had already been condemned for the work they are presently doing, men who had secretly crept into the church, who came in like a stealth bomber that was undetected, it is an interesting word used here for it means they “settled along side of you”, and that they “lodged among you”. Remembering that we recently saw the church growing from a mustard seed to a tree and having birds lodge themselves in its branches we are perhaps given greater light here, perhaps some of the birds that will lodge in the branches of the last days church will be men who are already condemned, men who are godless, men who change the grace of God into a license to sin. We live in a day when the church is fast coming to the place where anything goes, where we learn that God loves us, that God is in everyone therefore no matter what we do, no matter how we live we are all saved and all heading for heaven. Yes, these men can even be willing to deny our sovereign Lord. We must understand the dangerous days we live in and we must earnestly strive for the true faith that we have been entrusted with.

**Galatians 1:6-7 “I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ.”**

As Paul makes clear, he is astonished that very quickly some of the new children were deserting the faith and turning from the gospel to “another gospel” or a “different gospel”. We must understand that the enemy will do his best to keep us from Christ, and from the true gospel. If we meet the true Christ the Enemy will continue to work to pull us from the Christ into falseness. This is the day and

age that we live in, a day when the enemy is working at pulling people from the true Christ to a false Christ, from the true gospel to a false gospel. As Paul continues he expresses that they are moving into something that is not even the gospel at all but rather is it a perverted gospel. Paul says that what you are getting into is a corrupt gospel. Now, if with the beginning of the church we had the possibility of being removed from the true Christ and from the true gospel we must realize that today the same is very true. We must be on the look out for those who would present a gospel that seems okay but is actually perverted and corrupted. This I happen to believe is happening all around us today, and only true discerning children who are rich in the Word will be aware of it. Notice as Paul continues that he says it is throwing you into confusion; do you realize how much confusion there is in the religious world today? In verses 8-9 Paul takes a strong stand against those who would bring a perverted gospel, he contends that they are eternally condemned. My friends, I hate to share this with you, but there are some who are accepted as big spiritual leaders across our country today who have so perverted the true gospel that they are already eternally condemned.

Notice Paul's ministry in verse 10 **"Am I now trying to win the approval of men, or of God? Or am I trying to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a servant of Christ."** This is very important for we have many in today's ministry who are doing just that; it is their purpose to be men-pleasers, to give the people what they want, what makes them comfortable rather than what is Biblically solid. Do we not realize that to give the true messages of God is not necessarily to please people, nor to win the approval of men, no, to give the true message removes us from being men pleasers to being men aggravators. How delightful however, to be on Christ's team rather than man's team.

In 2 Corinthians 11:1-4 we have a passage that gives to us blessed truth concerning these issues. In verses 1-2 Paul makes it clear how it was his desire to present us unto Christ as our husband that we might be pure and totally belong to Him, however, in verse 3 he shares his concern: **"But I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent's cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ. For if someone comes to you and preaches a Jesus, other than the Jesus we preached, or if you receive a different spirit from the one you received, or a different gospel from the one you accepted, you put up with it easily enough."**

Even Paul, the best pastor we know of was concerned for those he had brought to Christ, he was afraid that they would be deceived, deceived in their minds by the craftiness or trickery of Satan, that they would be led astray from their sincere devotion to Christ. He was afraid that they would be led astray to another Jesus, another spirit, to another gospel from the one they had accepted. Notice please Paul's use of how they might remove themselves from Christ to a Jesus, reminding us that Christ is the true Son of God while Jesus could be false, Christ

can never be false. You can have another Jesus but you can never have another Christ. Notice, that very sad last phrase: **“You put up with it easily enough.”** Do you think that is what we have come to in America today? That men lead us astray into another Jesus, into another perverted gospel and we put up with it easily enough? “Father open our eyes, give us discernment, keep us on the right path, keep us ever upon the foundation of your Son, and ever keep us solidly in the true gospel of Christ.”

As we close this lesson let us close it with 2 Timothy 4:3-5.

**“For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths. But you keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of you ministry.”**

Imagine, that Paul had to express to Timothy that there was coming a time when men would not put up with sound doctrine. That there would come a time when men would not endure, would not want to tolerate sound, healthy, non-corrupted teaching. We certainly have come to that place today for many do not want the true Word, while the true children hunger for it. Instead they will accumulate teachers who will scratch their ears, or tickle their ears with what they want to hear. There is a whole lot of tickling going on today, there is a whole lot of teaching that simply scratches the ears and gives what people want to hear. This idea of turning their ears away means that they will “turn back” or even pervert the teaching of the Word. It tells us here that they will desire that men teach them myths or fables, or dreams if you will. Dreams as we have seen before are what many are preaching from today, preaching dreams rather than the Word of God and men love it to be so. Paul says to Timothy, but you are to keep your head in all situations that you are to watch in all things. This is a day when you and I must be watching like never before, for religious deception is real, the enemy leads it, and it is here today.



## **“Contending for the Truth”**

J.W. Sims

Jude 1:3

**“Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.”**

If this exhortation was needed when James wrote it how much more is it needed today. We must earnestly contend for the faith, meaning we should struggle for the faith in order to keep it solid, foundational, right and pure. It is sad to say that we live in a day when the church has been infiltrated by falseness, by those who have brought to us a more acceptable message, but a message that is not truth.

John MacArthur has written a book entitled The Truth War, which would be worthy of everyone's time.

Many in our day and age contend that there is no real truth, or that truth can change, thus they tell our children to live as they feel comfortable in living and they justify cutting and chipping away at our constitution since it nor the Word of God give real truth as far as they are concerned.

Isaiah 5:20 gives to us what I believe is foundational concerning what has taken place in America.

**“Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter”**

Yes, there is our problem in a nutshell, for we have allowed the enemy to twist everything in our lives and in our world. Good has become evil, evil has become good, light has become darkness and darkness has become light, and sweet has become bitter, and bitter has become sweet. Today, in our country the victim is the guilty party and the guilty party is the victim.

Romans 1:25 expresses what we have done in America in that we have changed or exchanged the truth of God for a lie and served the creature more than the creator.

We have given up on the truth, we have turned from the truth and accepted a lie, and we have accepted the falseness of the enemy instead of the truth of God.

2 Timothy 4:4 **“And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.”**

Yes, this is how we have gotten ourselves into this position, we have turned our ears from the truth, we no longer want to hear the truth, and we want to hear the false fables and stories.

2 Timothy 3:7 **“Ever learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.”** If ever there was a verse that displays our educational system it is this. If ever there were a verse that displays the modern day church it is this: education and developing your mind is far more important than coming to and giving the truth. We are ever learning but never able to come to the truth, for we use our minds, and we reject the truth.

2 Thess. 2:10 speaks of those who are being deceived because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. The passage contends that because of this God will send them delusion so that they will believe a lie. This is, I believe why America is where it is in regard to basic light, we are deceived and we will easily be ready to accept the lie of the antichrist.

We must ask what is truth? Though the world may not know the answer to this, every believer does know the answer:

John 17:17 The Word of God is truth.

John 16:13 The Spirit is truth.

John 14:6 Christ is truth.

Truth is essential for without truth there is no light, it is truth that brings us to the light, it is truth brought about by the Word, by the Spirit and by Christ that brings us to salvation.

As 1 Timothy 2:4 reads: **“Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.”**

**John 8:44 “Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him.”**

Satan has rejected the truth of the gospel, for he has rejected Christ. He will not abide or stand in the truth because there is no truth in him.

People all over the world are in need, they are in need of salvation but they are also in need of freedom. Bondage is a terrible thing and most of us do not understand just how terrible it is for we have never experienced it. But in John 8:32 we learn that it is the truth that brings us to freedom – only those who know truth – only those who have come to Christ are those who truly know freedom

## **“Genuine Ministry”**

J.W. Sims

Contrary to what many might believe today, genuine spiritual ministry is rare. Ministry that builds up the Kingdom comes from God and is done by God and never is done by the hand of man. We are only tools and instruments in the hand of God and no one can be so gifted in his flesh or so trained in his intellect that he can do great things for God. This is something that I am not sure the modern day Church understands. We believe that if people are charming, naturally gifted, strong in what they do they can do much for God – in fact we have bought into the false message that we can do things for God.

Real ministry when we are involved in it is the most precious. It brings to us personal satisfaction and enjoyment, it does not wear us out or burden us. By it we receive peace, rest, joy and strength, for real ministry refreshes us not drains us. When we are truly involved in ministry the way the Lord wants us to be we will not become burned out, we will not become exhausted nor full of sorrow. True ministry is by only one means and that is Christ flowing thru us, if it is Christ flowing thru us there is no personal effort, strain or work, for it is not we but He thru us. When we have learned that we yield and He flows we will never have the need to retire, but will be strong, enthused and energetic until He is ready to remove us. Serving Him in our flesh brings exhaustion while serving Him in our spirits brings renewal. This only is the kind of ministry we need today for this kind of ministry is the only kind that builds the Kingdom for it is led and done by our Lord and only He can build the Church and only He can receive the glory.

You and I must not push, we must not force, we must not go before Him in our enthusiasm but we must learn to wait, to yield, and to allow Him to move within that all will be for His glory. We need to understand this truth, and we must each be prayerfully asking the Lord what does He want me to do? So on the one hand I am expressing that you not move a head of God and on the other hand I am expressing that you ask for His will and when He reveals it that you be willing to be used. All sitting and resting is not spiritual, when we have been called to allow ourselves to be used.

If you just do it in the flesh there will be no real spiritual profit; sure you may build a building and a Church, but you will not build the kingdom, for only the Lord can build the Kingdom. You will soon have a ministry that falls and fades and you will soon be spiritually exhausted and no longer enthused concerning spiritual things. So there is an important balance to all of this that we need to receive and understand.

Psalm 127:1 is essential to all ministry today; we must grasp the truth of what the Lord is teaching us:

“Unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain who build it; unless the Lord guards the city, the watchman stays awake in vain.”

There is too much of this kind of labor today, it is vain labor, and it is vain because it is man doing it rather than God. The Lord Himself has to be given freedom to build His house for we cannot and if we try we are only doing it in vain. The idea here is that it would all be useless. I realize that most commentaries speak of this as someone’s house, or a city but is it not also true concerning the Church itself? Note also that it is the Lord we need to be the watchman over our ministry, if He does not watch over it we can stay awake all night but we will still be attacked.

Yes, the work of ministry is not my work nor is it your work it is the work of the Lord. If anything we should be praying that the Lord would build His Church and our ministry that He would watch over it and when He has a desire for us to work a work that He will reveal this to us and assist us in yielding to Him.

Like Mary we must learn to sit at the feet of the Savior until He expresses what He desire us to do in our Church as well as in our individual lives.

So now we know we cannot do it? What must we do after we have prayed, and after we have given Him the freedom He needs to work? After He has touched our heart to perform a work what do we do? Well, we need to learn from Paul, for though we see him as a very strong and forceful man, he really was not for his whole attitude of ministry is seen in I Corinthians 2:3:

“I was with you in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling.”

Here is the real Paul, and it is this that made him so strong in the hands of the Lord – Paul had told us that he had no confidence in the flesh in Philippians 3:3. Now he expresses to us what he was in himself: I came to you in feebleness – in frailty – even in sickness. He also said that he came to them in alarm, being afraid – and finally that he came trembling in anxiety. The whole idea was that Paul did not trust himself, nor has he confidence in what he was or had to offer. Paul makes it clear that if there is to be anything that spiritually takes place it will have to be because of the Lord and never because of Him. This is the key to all ministries, for each of us. This attitude is what makes us useable, it makes us so we will rely upon the Lord to ministry thru us – only these kinds of people are used of the Lord to bring forth spiritual life to others.

Allow me now to share with you a couple of passages concerning ministry that is not often thought of nor understood. The first is found in Ezekiel 44:15-18 and reads:

“But the priests, the Levites, the Sons of Zadok, who kept charge of my sanctuary when the children of Israel went astray from me, they shall come near me to minister to me; and they shall stand before me to offer to me the fat and the blood, says the Lord God.”

As you will remember in the Old Testament only a Levite who was a priest could minister in the sanctuary of the Lord. It was a very physical and outward kind of ministry that meant many spiritual things that few really understood. When they ministered they ministered unto the Lord, for all ministry is unto the Lord, and when they ministered they ministered standing before Him and offering up the sacrificial offerings for the sins of men.

V.16” They shall enter my sanctuary, and they shall come near my table to minister to me, and they shall keep my charge.”

Only these priests could enter into the presence of the Lord and only they could come unto His table to minister unto Him and to keep His charge. Thus ministry was to be performed by special people who God alone had decided could minister. Ministry today still needs a calling though its work is not as outward as it once was and God does not deal, as severely with individuals who try to minister when they have not been called to do so.

V.17 “ And it shall be, whenever they enter the gates of the inner court, that they shall put on linen garments; no wool shall come upon them while they minister within the gates of the inner court or within the house”

Now this really catches us off guard for we now realize that even the way that these priests were dressed was important to God. This of course is beyond our understanding today since most individuals do not equate the way they are dressed with whether or not they can minister. We have come into the freedom of Christ today and the way we dress does not make a difference in ministry as long as we are clothed in Christ. But back here in the Old Testament every detail of ministry had to be according to the plan of God. Here God says when you minister you must be in linen clothing, and never in wool. This may be strange to us but when we read the next verse we begin to gain understanding.

V.18 “They shall have linen turbans on their heads and linen trouser on their bodies; they shall not clothe themselves with anything that causes sweat.”  
Now we learn that the reason for linen rather than wool is so that they would not sweat when they ministered unto the Lord. Well that is very nice but what does it teach? The spiritual truth given in this Old Testament passage is vital for it teaches us that when we minister unto the Lord, when we serve Him in the Church and in every aspect of the ministry we must not sweat, in other words what we do is not to be from our own effort, from our own struggle, from our own busyness for when it is from us it produces sweat but when it is true ministry with the Lord working thru us there is no sweat, there is no fleshy effort of man but it all for Him. Now I ask you this: How much work of the Church today do you think is simply from the sweat of man? How careful we must be to stop doing the work of God and allow Him to do His work of ministry thru us for only in this way will spiritual richness and eternal ministry really take place. God desires no sweaty

ministries today, He wants not wool in His work, but only linen clothing as His Son is given freedom to ministry in His Church.

Now turn with me to another passage that touches on ministry and is found in 2 Samuel 6. Here we find that the Ark is not where it belongs, it is not with the people of God. David wants to get it back where it is suppose to be, but in the process of moving it they ignore God's orders in how it should be moved from one place to another. We must remember that Old Testament ways were very meticulous according to the desire of God; every rule and direction of God had to be followed and if you did not there was consequences.

Today again, Christ has changed ministry and given to us a freedom that was never known in the Old Testament.

V.3 "So they set the ark of God on a new cart, and brought it out of the house of Abinadab, which was on the hill; and Uzzah and Ahio, the sons of Abinadab, drove the new cart."

V.4 "And they brought it out of the house of Abinadab, which was on the hill, accompanying the ark of God; and Ahio went before the ark."

Now this was a happy time for the Ark would come to where it belonged and in verse five we see that David even played music before the Lord on all kinds of instruments ... You must remember that the ark is always symbolic of the presence of God therefore where the ark was there was the blessing, power, and protection of God. Everything they once had by having the ark you and I now have by having Christ.

But in verses six thru seven something happens that is difficult for us to comprehend, but when we do, it teaches a wonderful spiritual truth.

V.6 " And when they came to Nachon's threshing floor, Uzzah put out his hand to the ark of God and took hold of it, for the oxen stumbled."

This would seem like a proper thing to do, it is something that would come naturally to any of us if we were there. The oxen stumble and in order to keep the ark from falling Uzzah put out his hand to steady it.

V.7 "Then the anger of the Lord was aroused against Uzzah, and God struck him there for his error; and he died there by the ark of God."

How thankful we are that ministry is different than it use to be. God is here teaching us a wonderful truth that is vital to ministry today. Ministry is not to be touched by a fleshy hand even if it is a sincere touch. This was a fleshy touch of something that was very spiritual and God become very angry. The spiritual ministry of the Church is deep, rich and wonderful it is far more than many ever comprehend and we are often doing the work of God with our own hand rather

than with the hand of God. And what does it produce? Whether we realize it or not it is producing death. Today it is not physical death but spiritual death; there is death in the Church today as a result of men simply involving themselves in the work of God without His calling and without His leading. We of course say, but the ark would have fallen over if he had not steadied it, do you really believe that? This is the ark of God, it is that which implied the presence of God; do you think it needed the help of man? Of course not, but many in the Church today believe that Christ needs their help. In our previous verse we stated that there is too much sweat in ministry today and now based upon this verse we say there is too much death in the Church today. Where there is death in a ministry you can feel it, it is real, and there is darkness, coldness and a hardness there that is real. But in a ministry where there is life, you also can feel that for there is light, warmth and softness.

Again there may be some who would greatly criticize God for what took place here, and that is really because we can never understand the ways of God nor the demand He has that we follow the pattern He lays down.

Look at David's reaction: V.8 " And David became angry because of the Lord's outbreak against Uzzah; and he called the name of the place Perez Uzzah to this day." Even David, who loved God and knew the way of God, became angry with God, but he did not remain that way. Sure it is easy to become angry at God when He does not do things they way we believe He should but to ever remain angry against the Lord will eat up and destroy our lives for His ways are always the best way even when we do not understand them.

In verse 9 we learn that after this David was afraid of the Lord. It is easy to become afraid of God when you realize all the power and control He has. Many today are angry and afraid of God and therefore have cut themselves off from Him and you know what? They are miserable for it and whether they realize it or not they are wasting their lives.

As I close remember this, that if they had transported the ark the way God said it should be transported none of this would have happened. This was not God's fault this was man's fault, it was the direct result of disobeying God, but who received the blame? That's right it is always the Lord who receives the blame for what we ourselves have done or allowed.



## **“Attacks upon our minds”**

### **Lesson V**

J.W. Sims

As we continue our lesson of the mind please remember that these important truths are born out of the personal experiences of Jessie-Penn-Lewis and Watchman Nee and therefore one should saturate them selves with their wonderful material any time they have a chance to do so. The Battle for the mind and The Spiritual man should be studied carefully. These truths are forgotten today and therefore are making us more vulnerable to the subtle attacks of the enemy.

7. Fearful Mind. If your mind has not been given to the Lord, if it has not been renewed you have a mind that the enemy is able to saturate with fear. It could be a fear of anything and everything; not a natural normal fear but an un-natural and un-healthy fear; fear of the past, fear of the present and a fear of the future. A fear that will hold you, grip you and prevent you from doing what the Lord desires and perhaps even from what you desire. The enemy loves to captivate a Christian's mind, filling it with fear, anxiety, nervousness and worry.

When we have a mind of fear we lose our joy, peace and confidence of the Lord. Everything pivots around our fear and it not only affects our walk with the Lord but also our service. Fear can become so bad that it shuts us off from work, family and friends. When Satan has been allowed to penetrate and control a person's mind that person can become paranoid. He will believe evil forces, or individuals are out to get him, and therefore he will be afraid to be alone and will lock himself up in his own home or room believing that something or someone is going to get him. Our God is not a God of fear and if fear is overwhelmingly a part of our lives then we know it has come from the enemy. This kind of fear will prevent you from enjoying life and from properly functioning in life. With this kind of fear you will never become all that the Lord wants you to become and you will forever live in anguish of heart. When the enemy has control of this mind he can beset it with dreams and visions that will take away peace as well as sleep, thus causing this individual to be exhausted.

All of these minds that we have presented are minds that are susceptible to the attacks of the enemy and therefore at this point I would like to look at some of these attacks. I think we should each remember that there are many kinds of minds beyond what we have looked at, and there will also be many attacks that we perhaps have not even thought of; therefore we must learn the necessity of always being on our guard and careful to rebuke the enemy's attacks and give our minds unto the Lord. I do believe that some of the attacks of the enemy that come into our lives, have been accepted as normal never questioning that just maybe what we are experiencing is from the enemy and not simply an aging process.

## Attacks:

1. Placing poisonous thoughts into our mind concerning God, His Word and fellow Christians. We generally accept poisonous thoughts as if they are ours rather than realizing that perhaps the thought that has come to us may not be ours but from evil forces. These thoughts can be used to hinder our walk with the Lord and to destroy a relationship with a brother. Certainly poisonous thoughts are ever bringing damage into the “body of Christ.”
2. Placing prejudices in our minds concerning other people. Bombarding us with thought that causes us to dislike people because of the way they look or act. Often times we will have pre-conceived ideas placed into our minds by the enemy or by his use of others even before we have met the person. As a result we can have an idea or dislike for a person even before we have met them. This is a tactic of the enemy.
3. Depression is from the enemy. We can blame it on this or we can blame it on that but depression finds its roots in hell. It is Satan’s way of bringing darkness, sorrow, and gloom into a Christian’s life. Depression is a work from the enemy that comes from within while oppression is a work of the enemy that comes from without. Both however, are from him and both keep a child of the Lord from functioning properly and from enjoying the life the Lord has given to him.  
As Christians we must stop accepting everything the world tells us about ourselves, our conditions and our minds, there are spiritual attacks that affect us in serious ways, that only find their answer in Christ and not simply in a prescribed drug. We need to realize that when the enemy is given freedom to deal with our minds and to control them it will not be long until we also have physical problems as well. Perhaps all of us should learn to go to the Lord before we go to the doctor and lay our hearts, minds and bodies before Him for His loving care and protection.
4. Uncontrollable thoughts/wild thoughts. Though we have indicated these things we should speak more directly of them. Thoughts that simply come into our minds out of nowhere, thoughts that bombard us when we are trying to think pray or read the Word thoughts that we have no control over, thoughts that are placed into our minds by the enemy. Though these thoughts can come at any time they will be most prevalent when we are trying to do something related to a spiritual task.
5. Imaginations. An imagination that seems to run away with our mind, taking us into obscene ideas, thoughts and pictures, flashes of images crossing our minds to upset us and to direct us into wrong areas.

6. Confused ideas. Needing to make a decision but having no ability to do so. First deciding that this is the way to go and then deciding that this is the way to go, always changing always upset, never coming to a conclusion are all indications of the enemy bringing damage against our mind.
7. The inability to concentrate. If there is anything that the enemy does not want the Christian to do it is to concentrate. If you have difficulty concentrating this does not mean you need an herb to assist your mind, it may be the enemy bringing damage to your mind. Perhaps you are finding difficulty reading, listening, and studying, perhaps every time the preacher starts preaching your mind wanders over every imaginable idea. This is what the enemy does to keep the children of the Lord from obtaining God's truth. This is what he does to keep us from being fed and from growing in the deep things of the Lord. We must not be fooled; the problem is not we, we are not simply bored, the problem is that the enemy is actively working against us.
8. Forgetfulness. No one likes to talk about this because it has become a part of so many individual's lives. We are told all the things we can take for it and how it might be the first sign of Alzheimer's but do we ever pause to think that for the Christian this may be a real attack from the enemy? Forgetfulness, especially when it is in regard to spiritual things could be a serious attack from the enemy. Unable to remember a message, or a scripture verse that might be of assistance to a brother or sister is most damaging. Unable to remember pertinent passages, promises or messages from God would most definitely hinder our walk and enjoyment of Him. Needless to say a certain amount of forgetfulness is normal but when it is always around spiritual things it is most likely an attack from evil forces.

When it comes to our minds we must be careful to never accept a false interpretation of truth from the Word of God as if it is truth. In so doing we give the enemy access into our lives. If Satan can simply obtain one little hold on us he will use it to gain a greater hold. When you accept a false truth from the enemy as if it is a truth from God you allow yourself to become vulnerable to Him. As Christians we must realize that as Satan would grasp our minds he would also grasp our bodies. In these lessons we have not dwelled much upon this subject, but there is no doubt that many physical problems in the lives of the Lord's children are brought about by the workings of the enemy. This is something Satan does not want us to realize and therefore the Lord's shepherds seldom speak on and therefore many of the Lord's children are simply not aware of the enemy's physical attacks. This is something Satan does not want us to realize and therefore he will do everything he can to hide so that we accept physical problems as just that, physical problems.

As I close this section of our study there is something that I want to make very clear. Whenever we have things in our mind and we do not know where they have come from we must not accept them as being from ourselves. If our hearts are right before the Lord they perhaps are not from us at all but direct mental hits from the enemy. We must begin to question everything that comes into our minds or that we are dwelling upon. If ever we cannot control our thoughts we should assume that this thought is not from me but from the evil forces of darkness. May the Lord enrich you and help each of us to learn to walk carefully in spiritual discernment ever being on our guard for the work of a living enemy.

## Knowing our Sin

Most of you have heard the term propitiation. 1 John 2:2 when speaking of Christ says "And he is the propitiation of our sins: not for ours only but of the sins of the whole world."

Propitiation is defined as

That which propitiates or appeases; that which furnishes a reason for not executing a punishment justly due for wrong-doing; specifically, in the New Testament, Christ himself, because his life and death furnish a ground for the forgiveness of sins.

**Synonyms** *Atonement, Reconciliation, Propitiation, Expiation, Satisfaction*

Christ's sacrifice was a "1 and done" act that satisfies the record book of all sin, and is there for the asking. There is no need to re-sacrifice him or place him back on the cross. I am bringing this first so that we understand how it is our sins are atoned for and keep that in mind moving forwards through this lesson, basically just to bring it front of mind.

Isaiah 46:9 says Remember the former things of old; for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me,

Psalms 99:9 says Exalt the Lord our God, and worship at his holy mountain; for the Lord our God is holy!

The great "I am" is pure and utterly Holy, He can not abide with sin- His character is one of complete Holiness and no sin will be allowed in His presence. Seems a pretty important point to us if we understand that sin will not be tolerated by the Lord and that would likely negate our entrance to Heaven, we should maybe give some consideration on sin in our lives. That's reasonable isn't it?

So what is sin then? This wretched thing that our Holy and perfect God cannot abide with.

Romans 6:23 says the wages of sin is death, BUT the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ...

Romans 3:23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God -ALL!

James 4:17- how about that humdinger of a verse- it says whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin! Ouch that is a toughy there.

You recall that we walked through the 10 commandments a year ago-We came away with lots of clarity about what sin was in those lessons and we also understood that we cannot possibly live a sin free life-it is the essence and point of the law being written down.

Well the good news cannot be delivered until we understand the bad news, because really who would care? So if we think of that way, it becomes very important that we have a full grasp of what our sins are right? Makes sense? So what is our sin? The world and us can easily fall into the "I am a pretty good dude" (or dudette) trap. That is along the lines of well, I think I am okay, I mean haven't killed anyone this week, heck I didn't even tell a lie this week (did I?)-(Story about Kevin Jackson)

When we do not understand our sin it is impossible to be repentant, which makes it impossible to bring them before the Lord, which is in turn impossible to be forgiven! The result of course is eternal damnation- IDK about you but that is not an option open to me. Proverbs 28:13 Whoever conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will obtain mercy.

I want mercy! Not condemnation, which is exactly what everyone of us deserves.

How then do we know our sins? The 10 Commandments ? well okay that is a start..but how much more is there keeping in mind the verse in James that we looked at, or when our pride or covetousness is in play? How about our selfish behavior? Working a situation to our end without consideration of those around us? How about our sexual behaviour when you put in light of Christ's own words that to look at another in lust is to commit adultery against your spouse. How about our fears of worldly matters or our anxieties? I think we need to take this seriously and work our own salvation as Paul said in Philippians 2: 12-13 Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling: for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to work, for His good pleasure. Paul is inspiring the Christians of Phillipi towards their own independence in working out their salvation -Not to be dependent on him or any other person to do so. You must not rely on others solely to open Gods Word, to excel your prayer life or to walk towards Spiritual majority. This is a personal journey between you and the Creator of the Universe- of course we will look to other for guidance but it is not a road anyone else can walk for you. Keep in mind that Paul is addressing saints here not unbelievers, these are folks that understood that salvation was a free gift due to Christ's work only. The salvation he speaks

of is something they already possess. Salvation is of God while our part is merely instrumental and subordinate to Him- in short Paul said this knowing that they knew they could not in fact save themselves. That is fundamental to truly understanding what Paul was saying here. Too many people could misconstrue this verse to mean “see I can save myself”, that is blatantly false and that is not what Paul was saying. The Holy Spirit still works in us, enabling us to believe the Gospel, and purifying our hearts by faith.

Think of it like this, Christ work offers immediate justification and freedom from the slavery of sin, we are with the help of the Spirit to work out that salvation and freedom provided in our daily walk through our lives while declaring Christ and His gospel to others. Easy? No not at all, but a high calling to be sure. We could do multiple weeks on just this passage alone but I will move forward in my larger point for today's lesson.

So what I am trying to show you here? What does it mean for you? What can we do as followers of Christ to insure that we are approaching Him in the manner and position that we should-repentant

What I am trying to show is this- we need to recognize the need for us to know our sins. It is so easy to overlook them especially if we consider ourselves a “good person”. There are sins lurking in all of our lives that we live with, overlook or accept simply because we consider them a lesser sin. This gives us a false sense of security in our Christian Walk and that may be a very dangerous position for us to be in, in light of the fact that a Holy God cannot abide with sin-any sin! In order for us to work out our salvation, we must bring those sins to the Lord in repentance-laying them at the foot of the cross. So we need what then? Firstly to recognize them and that is done through the conviction of the Spirit. This must mean that we should be **praying daily** that the Spirit reveals our sins to us in a manner that shows how wretched we are. Secondly, we need to bring those to the Father in the name of the Son, recognizing those sins and praying for His forgiveness. Thirdly, asking the Spirit to strengthen us and assist us in forever walking away from those sins, trust me He will reveal more to you the further you walk. It is important that this becomes a frequent occurrence in our lives.

What this means for you and me going forward is a clear understanding of who we are before God. A path laid out in His Word to grow in Christ as we mature. Complete sanctification and atonement for our sinful nature. Ultimately our heavenly reward abiding with Christ forever. We are not promised our best life here in fact quite the opposite! If you have your best

live now, I feel bad for you as this is just a mere drop in the ocean of eternity. The Lord said if your eye cause you to sin then pluck it out!- this is a metaphor for how important it is to destroy sin in our lives. He did not mean to literally go pluck your eye but He did me it would certainly be better to spend this life with one eye than to spend eternity in hell-therefore we are better off by literally cutting sin out of our lives.

I Have relationships with friends of the past that are now decades old. They have no interest in knowing the Lord and certainly have no interest in confronting or knowing their sins. As a result they have been cut out of my life for all intents and purposes. This does not mean that I never see them and it does not mean that I treat them poorly when I do- They know where I stand and when given the opportunity I will give them some of the gospel message-incidentally do NOT ever Bible thump anyone-this will never work. We need to understand that the Holy Spirit works here not us. Our strongest asset is Prayer. We need to understand that the Lord will not miss a single ONE of His Own! That is an important statement. You are not in control of who will be saved-the Lords is for His own glory and purpose!

Matthew Henry in his commentary puts it this way:

Note, Those hard sayings of Christ, which are displeasing to flesh and blood, need to be repeated to us again and again, and all little enough. Now observe,

(1.) What it is that is here enjoined. We must part with an eye, or a hand, or a foot, that is, that, whatever it is, which is dear to us, when it proves unavoidably an occasion of sin to us. Note, [1.] Many prevailing temptations to sin arise from within ourselves; our own eyes and hands offend us; if there were never a devil to tempt us, we should be drawn away of our own lust: nay, those things which in themselves are good, and may be used as instruments of good, even those, through the corruptions of our hearts, prove snares to us, incline us to sin, and hinder us in duty. [2.] In such a case, we must, as far as lawfully we may, part with that which we cannot keep without being entangled in sin by it. First, It is certain, the inward lust must be mortified, though it be dear to us as an eye, or a hand. The flesh, with its affections and lusts, must be mortified, Gal 5 24. The body of sin must be destroyed; corrupt inclinations and appetites must be checked and crossed; the beloved lust, that has been rolled under the tongue as a sweet morsel, must be abandoned with abhorrence. Secondly, The outward



occasions of sin must be avoided, though we thereby put as great a violence upon ourselves as it would be to cut off a hand, or pluck out an eye. When Abraham quitted his native country, for fear of being ensnared in the idolatry of it, and when Moses quitted Pharaoh's court, for fear of being entangled in the sinful pleasures of it, there was a right hand cut off. We must think nothing too dear to part with, for the keeping of a good conscience

My past friends and I are in a completely different place in our lives and have no common interest when it comes to the Lord and I know if I join them in their activities I will be right back into my old sinning ways. Sin is pervasive that way and the Lord knows this-so cut off your hand if it causes you to sin!

Our daily prayers should start here: Pray for the Holy Spirit to open Gods Word to us-Pray that the Holy Spirit reveals our sins to us. Until we get this inline, I am not sure that we are even approaching being a prayer warrior. Our prayers may be rendered ineffective without the Truth of Gods Word and our Sins revealed to us. How can I possibly pray for you if sin is rampant in my life, or if I lack knowledge and the truth of Gods Word? I am not sure that I can. In fact I know that I cannot!

How much more effective of tool could we be for the Lord if we just get this basic understanding and prayer down on a daily or at least multi weekly basis? If your sins are laid down before the cross routinely and you are humbled before the Lord-what an effective instrument you become once you are emptied out! I ask, how can we possibly get there-without realizing our sin?

## Knowing our Sin Notes

### **1 John 2:2**

<sup>2</sup> He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world

### **Isaiah 46:9**

<sup>9</sup> Remember the former things, those of long ago;  
I am God, and there is no other;  
I am God, and there is none like me.

**Psalm 99:9**

<sup>9</sup> Exalt the LORD our God  
and worship at his holy mountain,  
for the LORD our God is holy.

**Romans 6:23**

<sup>23</sup> For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life  
in<sup>[a]</sup> Christ Jesus our Lord.

**Romans 3:23**

<sup>23</sup> for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

**<sup>2</sup>James 4:17**

<sup>17</sup> If anyone, then, knows the good they ought to do and doesn't do it, it  
is sin for them.

<sup>3</sup> for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

**Proverbs 28:13**

<sup>13</sup> Whoever conceals their sins does not prosper,  
but the one who confesses and renounces them finds mercy.

**Philippians 2:12-13**

<sup>12</sup> Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in  
my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out  
your salvation with fear and trembling, <sup>13</sup> for it is God who works in you  
to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose.

**Matthew 18:9**

<sup>9</sup> And if your eye causes you to stumble, gouge it out and throw it away.  
It is better for you to enter life with one eye than to have two eyes and be  
thrown into the fire of hell.

Matthew Henry Commentary:

Note, Those hard sayings of Christ, which are displeasing to flesh and blood, need to be repeated to us again and again, and all little enough. Now observe,

(1.) What it is that is here enjoined. We must part with an eye, or a *hand*, or a *foot*, that is, that, whatever it is, which is dear to us, when it proves unavoidably an occasion of sin to us. Note, [1.] Many prevailing temptations to sin arise from within ourselves; our own eyes and hands offend us; if there were never a devil to tempt us, we should be drawn away of our own lust: nay, those things which in themselves are good, and may be used as instruments of good, even those, through the corruptions of our hearts, prove snares to us, incline us to sin, and hinder us in duty. [2.] In such a case, we must, as far as lawfully we may, part with that which we cannot keep without being entangled in sin by it. *First*, It is certain, the inward lust must be mortified, though it be dear to us as an eye, or a hand. *The flesh, with its affections and lusts, must be mortified, Gal 5 24. The body of sin must be destroyed;* corrupt inclinations and appetites must be checked and crossed; the beloved lust, that has been rolled under the tongue as a sweet morsel, must be abandoned with abhorrence. *Secondly*, The outward occasions of sin must be avoided, though we thereby put as great a violence upon ourselves as it would be to cut off a hand, or pluck out an eye. When Abraham quitted his native country, for fear of being ensnared in the idolatry of it, and when Moses quitted Pharaoh's court, for fear of being entangled in the sinful pleasures of it, there was a right hand cut off. We must think nothing too dear to part with, for the keeping of a good conscience.

## **“Body Encouragement”**

J.W. Sims

To live in this world is a most difficult thing to do, there is so much darkness, so much that is confusing and evil that comes out toward us in our work places, schools and such. The world and those who live in it have much more ability to discourage us than to encourage us, much more desire to tear us down than to build us up. Therefore, the church, the body of Christ needs to become our sanctuary, the place where we receive refreshment, enrichment, and encouragement to press on in our walk with the Lord. If we do not get this in church, among believers where will we? Therefore, we must be sensitive to one another; we must realize that each one of us when we gather together are in need of encouragement. Why we may need encouragement may be far different, but the need of it remains the same. We should come seeking encouragement from others and from the Lord, but we should also come desiring to give encouragement to others. If there is anything we should not bring into the church it is discouragement for it can drive us into the ground. When discouragement is in the body it is a driving force that the enemy uses to damage us and to destroy our joy and strength, therefore let us each prayerfully be on guard for this work of discouragement and make it our aim to bring encouragement to one another.

There can be no doubt that the source of all encouragement is found in Christ for if we do not find it there, where will we find it and how will we have anything to give to others? Philippians 2:1 **if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love.**” The word if is not a question but means since there is encouragement and comfort in Christ. It is important to remind you that the word encouragement is closely associated with the word comfort, for to receive encouragement is to receive comfort. There is comfort and encouragement in Christ and therefore there is comfort and encouragement in the Body of Christ. To gather together is to receive these two blessed essentials for our lives.

Let us now turn to some important passages where discouragement kept the Israelites from going into the Promised Land and enjoying all the riches that God had set aside for them, from getting to where God wanted them to be and therefore from coming into maturity. When it came time to move into the new Promised Land in Deuteronomy 1:21 we read this from Moses: **“See, the Lord your God has given you the land. Go up and take possession of it as the Lord, the God of your fathers, told you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged.”** Note please that the concern that Moses had was that the Israelites might become discouraged and therefore not go in to possess the land. Becoming discouraged greatly affects us, and can keep us from moving forward into all that the Father has for us, and we therefore, must be on our guard for this work of the enemy and man.

Numbers 21:4 continues with this theme of discouragement for here we read: **“They traveled from Mount Hor along the route to the Red Sea, to go around Edom. But the people grew (impatient) became discouraged on the way; they spoke against God and against Moses, and said, why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the desert?”**

King James makes it clear that the Israelites became discouraged, and when they did they complained, grumbled and spoke against Moses and God. They even spoke against being taken out of the bondage of Egypt, which would be like you and I complaining over being redeemed from our sin.

Discouragement can come from many places, Satan can discourage us, people can discourage us, life can discourage us, and in fact we can so bombard ourselves that we personally are able to discourage ourselves. When however, it came to entering the Promised Land we see that those who were to check out the land were to come back and encourage the children with such good news that they would move forward, however they did not do so but rather came and discouraged them and caused them to lose heart. Deuteronomy 1:26-32 should be read in this context but please look at verse 27-28 **“The Lord hates us; see he brought us out of Egypt to deliver us into the hands of the Amorites to destroy us. Where can we go? Our brothers have made us lose heart. They say, the people are stronger and taller than we are; the cities are large, with walls up to the sky.”**

We must always be thankful for the Caleb's in the church the people who can trust God and rather than discourage the children, encourage the children.

Moving from Egypt thru the wilderness and on into the Promised Land, it implies moving from being a non-believer, to a believer and then from an immature Christian to a mature Christian. There are a lot of problems with this work and for many it takes years, and there are many who never are able to come into the Promised Land the place of maturity. Not only is it difficult for the believer but also for the shepherds who are supposed to do the work it is frustrating and most exhausting.

Moses knows this, and is himself not given the privilege of bringing the children into the Land and knowing the difficulty expresses what the people must do for Joshua who will lead them into the land. Deuteronomy 1:37 **“Because of you the Lord became angry with me also and said, you shall not enter it, either. But your assistant, Joshua son of Num, will enter it. Encourage him, because he will lead Israel to inherit it.”** Those who have a responsibility to lead folks into all that God has for them, from immaturity to maturity are the folks that are always going to have to be encouraged concerning the job. In Deuteronomy 3:26-28 where Moses reveals he was upset about not getting to go into the Promised Land, makes it clear that God told him to commission, encourage and strengthen Joshua for the job. Perhaps we should learn to lay hands upon those who are to take over our work that the work of the ministry might continue.

At a time when the Israelites were having grave difficulty concerning a battle against the Benjamites, when they had lost twenty-two thousand men in one day, we find in Judges 20:22 **“But the men of Israel encouraged one another and again took up their positions where they had stationed themselves the first day.”** It would be best to read thru this chapter to grasp the seriousness of the situation but the only thing I would like to point out for us in this lesson is that when we are in tough times we truly need to be willing to find encouragement in one another.

There was also a time when David was really hurting, his wives had been captured, men were discussing stoning him and he was greatly distressed but we read in I Samuel 30:5 that David encouraged himself in the Lord God.

There are times when no one can help us no matter how close we are to them, there are times when friends, not even a husband or wife can encourage us for the only place we can go for encouragement and comfort is to the Lord.

I Corinthians 14:1-3 is probably important for our lesson, in that it makes clear that a person who ministers the Word, who prophesies is a person who will give forth strength, encouragement and comfort. Thus we learn that the ministry of the Word is very vital when it comes to encouragement. I know myself that there have been times that the only thing that brought calmness to my heart was the Word.

Something that we all should do, but is especially important for a shepherd is what Paul suggested he did when it came to the Thessalonians, for in I Thessalonians 2:10-12 we read **“You are witnesses, and so is God, of how holy, righteous and blameless we were among you who believe. For you know that we dealt with each of you as a father deals with his own children, encouraging, comforting and urging you to live lives worthy of God, who call you into his kingdom and glory.”**

This of course is very important and something we all should learn to apply to our lives and ministry, it is also something that we as parents must learn to do. None of us but a thousand and I am sure often fail, but by God’s grace and leaning upon His Spirit we should press on.

I will close with a passage that speaks of our Lord and His gentle and sweet ministry in our lives. The passage is taken from Isaiah 42:1-4, verse 4 ends with: **“He will not falter or be discouraged till he establishes justice on earth.”** Is this not what we need to hold on to in our day, in our nation, with all of our personal problems and difficulties, He will not falter, He will not give up, though we might become discouraged He never will until justice is established upon the earth.

## **“Flesh or Spirit?”**

J.W. Sims

We do not often look deeply into the Word in order to have an in depth understanding of spiritual things. It is my prayer that this series will assist us in knowing ourselves as God knows us, and cause us to know His way into the full spiritual life and that He has for us in Christ. In this day and age as we look toward the end times it is vital that we know how to walk not in the flesh but in the fullness of God's Spirit, and just perhaps these lessons will take us in that direction.

Let us begin to touch upon the subject of the “flesh” as the Holy Spirit in God's Word presents it. Flesh as presented in the Bible means more than what we usually think of it as meaning, and therefore it is important to know it as our Father speaks of it.

We generally think of a person as being flesh or spiritual, as being a person who lives in a lot of bad sensuous sins or a person who does not. We pull out Galatians 5:19-21 where we see a long list of the results of the flesh and simply look at our lives as to whether we a part of these sins or not. If they are there we know we are fleshy and if they are not we may not say we are spiritual but certainly we are okay.

Romans 7:18 **“For I know that in me that is, in my flesh dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not.”**

Please carefully note what Paul is here saying: “I know that in me, that is in my flesh” Paul brings himself and his flesh together. Do you see it? Flesh and self are one, and we are all fleshy people and always have been. “Me” “self” and “flesh” we are all wrapped up into one.

Be we a non-believer or a believer our problem is flesh. Wherever self is allowed to be the dominating factor there is the work of the flesh. The awful sins of Galatians that come from the flesh are sins that come from us; these things are simply natural to us and flow from us if there is no movement of the Holy Spirit or work of the cross to prevent them. We are naturally, fleshy and natural bad.

This is something we Christians need to understand and which I hope to make clear, flesh is bad even when it appears to be good, it isn't just the bad fleshy things, for when we use our flesh to live the Christian life even that is bad.

We are all different and some of us are born with what I can sweet flesh, our nature is just sweeter and more gentle than others, and yet in the eyes of God it is still flesh, so we cannot evaluate people by their natural nature, but by the spiritual nature in Christ. Even when good things come from our flesh they are still fleshy things and that is what the modern day church does not seem to understand. God does not even want our good things when they come from our flesh, what He desires is the work of His Spirit through our spirits, this only is genuine spiritual work that lasts for eternity. It is easy to point out how bad and

fleshy some people are by the list given but we must realize that even those who may appear so sweet and righteous if it is from them they are also fleshy.

How did we get this way? Why are we naturally fleshy?

After the Fall of man in the garden, man became very evil and did everything he desired to do after the thoughts of his own heart and in Genesis 6:3 the Father said: **“My Spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh.”** Man who was spiritual when created by God, made his choice and when he did he became no longer spiritual but fleshy. The first man Adam became flesh, and when he did he simply passed this flesh problem right on down to every generation.

Therefore, when we were born into Adam we are born into the flesh, and as long as we are in Adam we are flesh. We need to get out of the family of Adam and into the family of Christ, therefore simply speaking we are born once into Adam and we therefore need to be born again into Christ. That is why the scripture says we must be born again. I would like to tell you that simply receiving Christ would be enough to deal with the flesh problem but it involves more than that and as this lesson continues we will explain that to you.

When scripture uses the word flesh it is the Greek word sarx, and it means more than flesh for it means carnal, it also means human nature, and therefore means all that we are.

A non-believer is only flesh while a believer is both flesh and spirit. So, though I would like to tell you when you become a Christian you are no longer flesh but only Spirit, I cannot, I know it and you know it. Therefore, we believers have this continual battle between the part of us that is spirit and the part of us that is flesh. That battle is easily described in Galatians 5:16-18

**“This is say then, walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: an they are contrary the one to the other; so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.”**

The word spirit here is not the Holy Spirit but is referring to our spirit. A believer has a spirit and flesh that are contrary to one another and one desires against the other all the time so that we are in a constant battle, a battle that can only find help by the work of the cross and the work of the Holy Spirit.

Our flesh has been the dominating factor in our lives since we were born and now because we have received Christ and our spirits have been made a live there is now a battle for dominance. My flesh wants to continue to dominate my life as it always has but now the Spirit of God wants to dominate my life through



my spirit. So now we are a two-fold people having a desire to serve the Lord and yet a working in our lives to still serve the flesh.

In I Corinthians 3:1-3 we are given a clear picture of what the Christian looks like when he still a baby dominated by the flesh, a person that is referred to as being fleshy, carnal, of self. It would appear from this passage that too look like this for a time is normal, but when we have had time to grow, it is no longer normal.

**“But I brethren, could not address you as spiritual men, but as men of the flesh, as babes in Christ. I fed you with milk, not solid food; for you were not ready for it; and even yet you are not ready, for you are still of the flesh. For while there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not of the flesh, and behaving like ordinary men.”**

The New International uses the word worldly while King James uses the word carnal, which is a much better word to express what Paul, is here saying. The person is not simply worldly for they are worldly because they are in the flesh they are worldly because they are carnal or fleshy.

## **“Bound by Bondage”**

J.W. Sims

Spiritual things are far more genuine than we choose to accept, the reality of God and the reality of Satan both are far more of a reality than our world is willing to admit. When it comes to God it is His desire to bring to you freedom, to assist you in being free and able to enjoy spiritual control in your life. When however, it comes to the enemy he desires to bring to you bondage, and to assist you in being bound up by the forces of this life.

So many today are bound up by so many things, there are so many individuals who have something in their lives that controls them, that over powers them, and keeps them going in wrong directions. Satan's bondage leads to misery, unhappiness, and destruction, while the freedom of God lead to joy, spiritual richness, health and prosperity. Many today that do not see their problem as bondage, are actually proud of their bondage and will speak of it to others as if they are proud of what they do and how they live.

The problem with all of this is that Satan makes everything he is and everything he has appear as if it is good, beautiful, desirous, pleasurable and needed, while God wonderfully opens His arms and waits to give us the best that life can offer. Satan is always out there showing us what we just have to have, bringing us into bondage, and more often than not we just never see what we have gotten ourselves into until it is too late, until we are stuck in some kind of bondage that we cannot get out of.

Now who knows what this bondage might be? What my bondage is that he tries to bring me into is not the bondage that he tries to bring you into. For each of us it can be a different kind of problem. Because you can just bet Satan knows how to get each one of us. The desire for riches, the hold of drugs, the hold of alcohol, the desire for fame, the desire to be popular, and the hold of sexual things. It doesn't really matter what it is, but if it is something that has bound us up, and held us captive it is not good. Bondage in our lives, restricts us and prevents us from knowing God, it can keep us from having joy and freedom to do what we want to do. What ever it is that holds us in some kind of bondage, can keep us from enjoying our lives and progressing, as God would have us.

Therefore, it becomes obvious that getting out of bondage and into the freedom of Christ is the best thing for our lives and us. Bondage eventually brings death while freedom brings a full, healthy and happy life.

Let us now see what we can learn from the Bible concerning this problem of bondage. I will begin this lesson where I have taken you so many times before and that of course is to Exodus where we join the Israelites who are in bondage by the Egyptians. You know, you just cannot be happy when you are in

bondage, be it a thing, the enemy or to a person who has you in bondage. We will just not be happy until by God's grace we are broken free.

When we come to Exodus chapter one it is important that we use the King James Version to get to the word bondage. In verse fourteen we read: "And they made their lives bitter with hard bondage." This bondage is the bondage of affliction and work; it is a cruel bondage that exhausts us. Do you realize that a tool that the enemy is able to use in your life to bring bondage is work? Work and bondage go together, and that is why when you work in this world you need to be where the Lord desires you to be and to rest totally in Him. Don't just go out and get any job, but get the job where the Lord wants you to be.

For Israel this problem of bondage only grew worse and worse, for you see when the enemy brings bondage into our lives it does not get better and better. It just kind of grows and becomes more intense until it is eating up our lives. Finally, in chapter 2:23 the Israelites could take it no longer and in their groaning they cried out to God for deliverance, and God heard their cry. It is important for you and I to realize when we are in bondage, to realize when we can take it no longer and where to go for help. Some people are not getting delivered because they like being in bondage, they are not yet sick of being in bondage, for they think they can leave it any time. When you are in bondage to something that something becomes your focus and when it does you do not enjoy anything else in this world, it blinds your eyes so you do not see anything you have and therefore you lose out on so much that is so important. No one can tell you anything, they see it but you don't and you will not get any help until the Lord Himself reveals your bondage.

When we see, when our eyes are opened, we cannot take it any longer, and then when we cry out to the Lord He hears and begins to move. Exodus 6:6 "I am the Lord and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will rid you out of their bondage, and I will redeem you with an stretched out arm." When we are in bondage only the Lord can bring us out

It is interesting when this bringing out of bondage is mentioned as something God did, because it always refers to God bringing them out of a house of bondage. This is so true for so many people as they live in a house of bondage. There is no peace, no freedom and no victory for their lives become a house of bondage.

One of the things to keep in mind if you are or have been in bondage to something, be it a person, a drug, an alcohol or an emotion, once you Connect to God and He brings you out, do not go back in. In the story of Israel after coming out of their bondage they actually chose a captain to work on going back into the bondage that God had delivered them from. They seemed to forget the anguish, the exhaustion and the misery and rather than facing the newness of life that God brought to them they were willing to go back. My friends, once

God has brought you out of bondage, once He has delivered you from the enemy, for a person, from a hold of some kind why would you choose to go back? Remain strong and steadfast in the Lord and do not return back to bondage.

This morning I don't know what kind of bondage you have experienced or might be experiencing for bondage has a multitude of varieties. I only know that whatever your bondage might be it will eat you up inside and outside. Romans 8:15 expresses a spirit of bondage and fear. There are many who have the bondage of fear in their lives, always fearful of this and fearful of that, fearful of things that never will come to pass but which can keep you miserable and full of sorrow.

I know that according to Galatians there are people who like to bring Christians into bondage and remove them from the freedom that is in Christ, therefore, we must always be on our guard for them and the damage they can bring.

As we have discussed before there is a bondage that is a fear of death as described in Hebrews 2:15. How many of us have lived in bondage of a fear of death? Often so dwelling on death that we lose our joy of life as well as our focus upon Christ.

As Christians we need to realize that a purpose of Christ's ministry was to bring you and I out of this problem of bondage, to be for us deliverance as is recorded in Luke 4:18. Deliverance is the ministry of Christ and no matter what it is that holds us it can be dealt with, we can find victory: be it sin, be it Satan, a person, an emotion, or even a drug or sexual problem Christ is our deliverance as is seen in Colossians 1:13.

## “Burdens of Life and Burdens of Ministry”

J.W. Sims

When it comes to a lesson on burdens there are two types of burdens: There are the burdens of life, and there are the burdens of ministry. Though both are heavy they are very different in their source. Though they both can bring forth like feelings and experiences they are far different, and produce far different results.

The burdens of life come into everyone's life, be you a believer or a non-believer you will have burdens that come into your life. These kinds of burdens are the result of the entrance of sin into our world.

The burdens of life as I have called them are from Satan, as he loves to burden people with the weight of all kinds of things. The burdens of life are also the result of our own sin, as Job said in 7:20 “Sin is a burden” and as he continued he made clear that this sin made him a burden unto himself. A lot of people are burdens to themselves because of their own sin.

Israel had during their time in Egypt, what were called taskmasters, those who heaped burdens upon them. There are taskmasters today, people who heap burdens upon us, taskmasters who I believe are from the enemy, who are evil spirits who bring burdens into our lives. When Moses worked to bring people from their burdens the taskmasters work only grew more intense, and that is because the enemy knows that when people are free from the burdens of life they simply do better and are able to serve the Lord. In the latter years of Israel's bondage to Egypt you will find that God saw the burdens and worked to bring them out from them, you will also see that He laid this ministry upon Moses who also saw their burdens and worked to bring them out from them. When it comes to the burdens of life we need release, we need to have those burdens removed from us or we will never be able to function properly. Burdens hurt us physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually and because they do they bring destruction and devastation. The burdens of life are never good burdens, they are not from God, and therefore bring no fruit, they simply hinder our lives and bring death. They are not burdens that you and I are to carry, and no matter what they are they should be brought unto the Lord. For these kinds of burdens we must ever hold onto Psalm 55:22 **“Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee; he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved.”** If we bring these burdens to the Lord we will have victory, no matter what the situation we will get through it and we will not be moved.

Now, though this idea of the burdens of life is important and could take up our time together there is another burden that I want to share with you this morning and that is the burden of ministry. I think there are many folks who confuse the burdens of life with the burdens of ministry, and we ought not do so. The burdens of ministry are also a heavy weight that can bring exhaustion, weariness and depression, just like the burdens of life they can cause us to want to give up. There is however a vast difference for the burdens of ministry comes

from God, not from the enemy, not from sin, not from other people and not from us. As the burdens of life are unspiritual the burdens of ministry are spiritual. The heaviness, anxiety and pain we feel may seem the same, but the source is far different and the end result as well. You see, God places a spiritual burden upon a servant of His, it is a weight of ministry to carry, but as we carry it and fulfill His desire the end result of this burden is spiritual fruit for eternity, not devastation and death, but fruitfulness and life. What we have to understand is that with a ministry that God places upon us comes heaviness; it is just the way it is. If we are not willing to carry the load, the burden that God has to place upon us we simply cannot have a ministry. We might think we have a ministry, but we do not, ministry and the burden of ministry go together.

We can see indication of what I am trying to express in the Old Testament in Numbers chapter 4 where the responsibilities of the Levites are given concerning the Tabernacle. We see in verse 15, and verses 24-25, 27, and 32 that the Kohath's were the ones that were to bear the weight, carry the load when the Tabernacle was to be moved. It is not a great job, and I am sure that not many desired it, but it had to be done. Someone had to be designated, set aside with the ministry of carrying the load. You had to be strong, and if you were not you sure had to become strong, because if you did not do your job the ministry of the Tabernacle could not get where God wanted it to go. I believe the same is spiritually true today; there must be individuals that God sets aside for carrying the load, for bearing the burdens of ministry.

In Nehemiah where we see the rebuilding of the wall one of the essential things needed was people who would bear the burdens, people who would carry the rubbish away. Burden bearers were needed so that those who were called upon to build could build. As the reconstruction of the wall needed those who carried the load as well as those who would build, so every ministry of God today needs the same. We must have individuals who carry the burdens of ministry so the ministry can be built. One of the problems in Nehemiah chapter 4 verse 10 was that those who were burden bearers were becoming exhausted and losing their strength and because of it the building of the wall was being hindered. How important burden bearers are in the work of the kingdom and in the work of every local ministry. When those who have been given the work of bearing the load become exhausted, weary, discouraged and are no longer willing to do what God has asked, the building of the ministry is hindered and everyone suffers. It is interesting to point out to you that the battle of the enemy was so great that the burden bearers not only had to carry the load, but they had to be prepared for battle, they had to have a sword in one hand and carry the load with the other. It's not easy to be a burden bearer and is heavy work on the one hand and a battle with the enemy on the other.

Moses was a burden bearer; he could not have done the work he did if he was not. Everyone who is placed in a ministry must be a burden bearer, and yet being one is probably the most difficult and exhausting work that he has. If you

were not given a burden from God you would not even go out and do the job. Ministering the word is very seeable, and many folks believe that it is an exalted and desired position, but believe me behind all the glory, is unbelievable pain, grief and heaviness that require the support of God. Moses was given a burden for the burdens of the Israelites and because he was burdened his life was full of a heavy spiritual load. There was a point when he could no longer take it a point where he wanted to die and so we read in Numbers 11 10-15 how bad it was. The people were weeping and complaining because they did not have what they wanted, because they wanted meat instead of manna. Moses, could not take it any longer:

**“Wherefore hast thou afflicted thy servant”?** Moses felt that his work of ministry, that his burden was not something good but was an affliction from God. The word used here is very strong and implies a breaking into pieces, so as far as Moses was concern burden ministry is very difficult.

**“Wherefore have I not found favor in thy sight?”** As far as Moses was concerned being in the position he was in meant he had no favor with God.

**“That thou layest the burden of all this people upon me.”** Note please that Moses recognized that what was placed upon him, came from God, and it was a weight. The burden of ministry that we have must come from God, and when it does we cannot lay it down unless he takes it away, for to lie down a burden that has been given by God hinders ministry and brings unhappiness into our lives. We should never lay it down unless we know for certain that God has placed the burden we had upon someone else. Thus, no shepherd can simply retire, it cannot be pleasing to God, and it can only bring serious damage. This burden here is spoken of as a responsibility, our burden is our responsibility given by God and we must sometimes for a lifetime carry that responsibility.

**“Have I conceived all this people?” “Have I begotten them”?** Well, not literally, but spiritually I think so, we all have children we are responsible for and because we do, we are as if we have conceived them, we are their fathers in the Lord. Is it not a very sad thing in our society that many parents desert the children they bring into this world and do not care for them?

**“That thou shouldest say unto me carry them in thy bosom, as a nursing father beareth the sucking child, unto the land which thou swarest unto their fathers.”**

Yes, Moses this is exactly what you are to do, this is exactly what everyone of us are to do, that have been given a burden of ministry, you must carry the load, you must carry the children until you bring them to the place where I want them to be, Moses you must bring them to the promised land. You must be as a **nursing father who carries them and nourishes them until they become full adult children and are where I want them to be.**

Moses however, cannot take it any longer, like you and I he feels as if he must give up. He says in verse 14 **“I am not able to bear all this people alone, because it is too heavy for me.”** Have you ever felt that way? As a pastor I sure have, as a pastor I have wanted to give up, but I cannot and why? Because God has not taken away the burden and therefore in spite of the pain, the weight, and the exhaustion I must go on and continue the work He has given me to do. Moses was so down, he wanted to die, he wanted God to take his life, but of course God did not, not until he got the children just about where God wanted him to get them, and it was then and only then that the burden was gone, and it was only gone because Moses was no more. So like Moses many of us will carry our burden right up until the Father takes us home.

To close this on a personal note that the Lord has used to teach me this spiritual truth, I presently have a Shetland Sheep Dog that I and my wife dearly love, he is only ten years old but has a disease that caused him to lose his muscle strength in his legs, and can no longer go outside or in without being carried. It is frustrating and painful to us, but we must carry him, for if we do not carry him his life will have to end. This is much like those who have been given a burden of ministry, they must carry that weight for in carrying the weight of that ministry they continue to bring life and give life and allow the ministry to continue. How desperate we are for burden bearers today, who will, in spite of all the weight, all the pain and all the difficulty with continue to carry the load of the ministry so that there will be life.



## **“Driven or Led?”**

J.W. Sims

God's work is God's work, it is not my work and it is not your work. Only God can do God's work; man's ideas, man's thoughts, man's methods and man's plans have no place in God's work. When it comes to real, genuine, spiritual work, God alone is able to perform.

We cannot do God's work, we can be used of God to do His work but without God we can do nothing; we are not workers for God, we are workers with God. Though what I am here saying is very simple, and though in the early years of the church it was a known truth, I think today in our modern America we have forgotten this truth. Today we seem to think that because of our intellect, training and finances, we can do God's work, this, however, is a very false truth.

If we are workers with God, we will have to know what God wants to do and what God is doing. We will have to be where God is and we will have to be following, not leading. This I also think is a problem with us today, we like to lead and expect God to follow, we like to come up with the program and expect God to bless. This however, is simply not God's way because the program is His and we are expected to follow. If we are workers with God we will have to be a people of prayer. We will have to learn how to wait and how to rest. Its difficult when we have so much fleshy energy, but God does not ask for our fleshy energy He asks for us to allow Him to move. We will have to learn not to rely upon self, upon our ability, and our intellect. We will have to learn not to implements a plan that man has put together, but only what God has put together.

As several of you know, from bulletins I have recently written and from conversations we have had, I have a real burden and a real problem with the present Purpose Driven Church ministry. It is, I believe, a program that has been put together by man, and has been used more in the business world than in the church. It is from man and it is for man, and not necessarily of the Holy Spirit, and yet some 200,000 churches across America have bought into this program as if this is the only way to reach men for Christ. Its purpose is to bring the seeking people into the church by entertaining and giving them what they want, and in the process it often places a church in turmoil and drives out the true children of God. This work will bring the godless in and shove the Godly out, if they have enough discernment to get out. We cannot do God's work using man's methods, for ours is not to be driven by a program but to be led by the Spirit of God. The main purpose of church is to gather the children together to worship the Lord, not to give the world what it wants and thus corrupt the true Body of Christ.

What we need is a movement of God, a movement from Him that opens the eyes of the children, that gives light to the shepherds. We are to do nothing

until He moves, and then we simply move with Him; not for Him, not a head of Him, but always with Him. When we begin to work with God, when we learn to wait upon Him and rest in Him, when we learn to follow rather than lead, we find ourselves enjoying ministry and not becoming exhausted by the work we do, but rather actually being refreshed.

My desire is to simply point us to a few important verses concerning the need of the Spirit of God rather than the work of man in this lesson. We cannot do it, so we should realize it and stop trying. If we have a job it is to ask God to move, so we will not have to. I can't bring a person to the Lord, and you can't bring a person to the Lord, I can't build a church, and you can't build a church, all of this work is God's work.

Genesis 1:1-2 clearly gives to us the condition of our world as well as the condition of an individual's heart that is without God. After it does this it reveals to us the only way victory and fruitfulness can come. It has never changed, for as there was darkness, emptiness and devastation in Genesis, so there is in our world, and as the Spirit of God had to move so the Spirit of God has to move today also. Not my work, not your work, not even the work of the church unless it is yielded to God and following after Him.

Notice the work of the Spirit in Ezekiel in chapter one verse 12 and verse 20. These are the divine faces of Christ and this is a living angelic being that is beyond our comprehension, but all I want to point out to you is how it was all led by the Spirit of God.

I Corinthian 2:11-12 is important for us as it makes clear if we are to know the thoughts of God we must know the Spirit of God. Therefore, all who want to truly be part of giving forth a genuine ministry for God will have to be close to the Spirit. Please notice that there is a spirit of the world, and believe me when that spirit is allowed into the church the church will be devastated. Notice as you look at verse 13 that we cannot use the words of human wisdom in declaring the Word, we cannot use man's devices, which I believe is truly being done in The Purpose Driven Church.

Along with this I Timothy 4:1 becomes essential to our lesson, for there we read: "The Spirit speaks expressly that in the latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils."

Am I so bold as to imply that what is being presented to the church today in the Purpose Driven Church is so dangerous and so off base that it just might come under this verse? I guess I am that bold as I see it very possibly as a program that might very well be from deceiving spirits who have brought into the church a false doctrine, a false method of ministry that will corrupt the church and cause God to lose glory and worship, not to mention the devastation to the children of God.

When it comes to ministry, it is God's work and our responsibility is simple, which is to wait upon Him and to follow in the path that He leads. A good verse to remember when it comes to listening to God and yielding to Him in the church's outreach is Isaiah 40:13 "Who has understood the mind of the Lord, or instructed Him as His counselor, who did the Lord consult to enlighten Him? And who taught Him the right way? Who was it that taught Him knowledge or showed Him the path of understanding?"

We must slow down, we must stop, we must fall before the Lord and give to Him the freedom He desires and deserves, Did He not declare in Psalm 127:1 "Unless the Lord builds the house, its builders labor in vain." There is just so much vain labor today, for man somehow over the years accepted the idea that the Lord needed him to build the house. The Lord never has needed us to build His house, He simply asks us to rest in Him and rely upon Him as He gives us guidance and moves through us by His Spirit.

When one reads through the book of Acts he cannot miss the work of the Holy Spirit when it came to building the church. He chose those who were to serve, and He directed them as to where they should serve and what they should do in service. Acts 9:31 is the only verse I will share with you as it summarizes His work: "Then had the churches rest throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied." Here is the blessed work of the Spirit of God when it came to ministry; He encouraged, and comforted the children as He worked to multiply the church. That's right, not only did He comfort, and encourage the people but also He was also involved in the multiplying of the ministry. That is right, it was the work of the Spirit that was needed to build the church.

Because of the great work of the Spirit when it comes to the building of the church we are to carefully stay out of the way and give to Him the freedom He needs, and as the scripture teaches we must be careful neither to grieve nor to quench the spirit. These two things I believe man is doing today. We are so busy doing the work of the Spirit ourselves that we are grieving and quenching Him, and when we do that we prevent Him from touching hearts, bringing conviction and bringing people to Christ.

As I close this lesson I want you to know that Satan drives, He pushes, He always has, but when it comes to the Lord He never drives, He only leads. So I ask, what would you like in your life, as well as your ministry, do you want to be driven, or do you want to be led? Do you want to be pushed and forced or do you want to be gently encouraged and led by His hand?

## **“Brokenness and my spiritual service”**

J.W. Sims

As I had shared in our previous lesson on brokenness we all like to be strong, confident, complete and able to do all that we choose to do when it comes to the work of the Lord. This seems to be the right and proper way; it would seem to be the natural way that would be the design of God. This however, is not God’s way. As we will look at Paul and his ministry we will discover that even for Paul it was not this way. The basis of Paul’s ministry is found in I Corinthians 2:1-5 where we read:

**“And I brethren, when I came to you, did not come with excellence of speech or of wisdom declaring to you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified. I was with you in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech any my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom but in demonstration of the Sprit and of power, that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.”**

When it came to genuine ministry it could not come from man. Not even Paul would declare the Gospel of Christ according to excellent speech nor his wisdom. Something I am afraid that most pastors do today. We seem to think that the more wisdom and eloquence we have the more fruit we will bear in bringing people to the Lord. This is not rue today and it never has been true. Paul, as great as he was did not come in wisdom to give the message of God. He determined to know nothing except Christ and His crucifixion.

Paul gives to us his secret for genuine ministry that touches the heart and brings people unto the Lord. Paul said, **“I came to you in weakness, in fear and in much trembling.”** Paul said, when I came to you to minister the Word I came in weakness. This word can mean without strength but it can also speak of sickness. Paul might have been saying when I came and ministered unto you I came with a body that was weak and even sick. Yes, even the great man Paul knew what it was like to be weak and sometimes ill. This however, did not cause him to give up on ministry but rather to depend upon the Lord for his strength and ability to serve. This, as we are trying to express to you is the key to genuine spiritual ministry; that is, not my strength, but His.

Secondly, Paul said I came to you in fear. Who would ever think of Paul the powerful missionary of God ever ministering in fear? This is an interesting word here and can sometimes be used in a very strong way to imply terror. It could also be used to imply a fear that would cause one to shrink in fear, to be timid or to run away. I think it is the last connotation that is right for us, and reveals that even the great man Paul ministered being timid and even shrinking in fear. My friends, this is real ministry, a ministry that came in fear of self and without confidence while having trust and confidence in the Lord. Paul did not trust himself for Paul knew better for he had been broken and as he said in Philipians

3:2 he had no confidence in the flesh; it is those who have no confidence in the flesh that are the most used of the Lord. They are the ones who have learned to lean upon the Lord and not upon self. This is what lays the foundation for true ministry that touches the lives of people for it is a ministry from the Lord and not from man.

Finally Paul said, that he also ministered in much trembling, literally a quaking in fear, a trembling when he came to minister the Word unto the children. Today men pride themselves in their education and knowledge. They go through a great deal to be eloquent in the pulpit. Not so, however with Paul he came into the pulpit with his knees shaking, because he had no confidence in himself and because he realized the responsibility before him and because he realized it must be by the strength and presence of the Lord within him and never him. O how we have fallen in this area of genuine ministry today. We train our young men fully in every possible area so that they will be confident and dependent upon their training rather than upon the Lord. We have churches throughout America who demand and expect their ministers to be strong, powerful and dynamic when perhaps the greatest and richest thing that could happen for the church is for its servants to fall before Him with no confidence, with nothing but weakness, fear and trembling. Then great and rich blessing of His presence might come forth like we have never known in our generation.

In I Corinthians 1:27 we read: **“But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; 28 and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not to bring to nothing the things that are, that no flesh should glory in His presence.”**

How different are the ways of God when it comes to His use of servants to present His message. He desires to use the foolish, the weak, and the base – or insignificant. You see, God does not need you and I, He does not desire to use all that we think we are. In fact He will go out of His way to find what is not considered strong or dynamic by the world to prove that it is His Son within the vessels He chooses and not the vessel itself. Why does He do this? He does this so that no flesh shall glory in His presence.

Paul had this truth wonderfully made clear to him in 2 Corinthians 12:7-9 where we read:

**“And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me; lest I be exalted above measure. Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me. And He said to me, my grace is sufficient for you, for my strength is made perfect in weakness.”**

The Heavenly Father will allow things in our lives that will keep us humble, that will keep us depending upon Him rather than self. Why? So that we will learn that His grace is sufficient for us and for our ministry. So that we will learn that when we are weak His strength is sufficient to minister through us. It is a way that the Lord uses to keep us humble and reliant upon Him rather than upon ourselves. A way that pure ministry will come to us through Him rather than just a ministry from a man. Therefore, Paul said in verse 9-10 **“I will gladly boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me, therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ’s sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.”**

In closing allow me to take you to Mark 2:1-5 to a beautiful story that you are familiar. It is of course the story of the crippled man who could not be given access to Christ because of His being in the house surrounded by people. The man needed healing but could not get to the Lord. Finally those who were carrying the man came up with a great plan; they would uncover the roof. When they had broken through the roof and let down the bed on which he was lying, Jesus saw their faith forgave the man of his sins and brought healing into his life. What gave the man access to Christ was the broken roof. It may seem insignificant but it was vital, for by brokenness we see a coming to the Savior. Sometimes in our lives, because of ourselves or because of others we just will never come to Him until there has been brokenness somewhere in our lives. As long as we are confident, as long as we are healthy, happy and satisfied we may never sense the need to get to Him, we may never sense the need of depending upon Him for happiness, satisfaction and a genuine ministry.

Yes, brokenness is best for it is God’s way. Perhaps the Lord has been trying to do this work in you, but you did not know it, you have not understood why there was so much difficulty in your life. It is not His purpose to make us stronger it is His purpose to make His Son stronger in us. We become weaker in our selves but stronger in Him. When those in the Church who minister the Word are broken, weak, full of fear and trembling, when they no longer depend upon self then we all gain a real sense of the Lord’s presence. When these broken people minister the Word the richness of the Lord comes forth and we are each enriched and given the joy of Christ.

## **“Contemplative Spirituality”**

J.W. Sims

Recently, I was asked a question concerning contemplative prayer and what exactly is it? This is a very important question in our day and age and so some research and careful answering of the question was required. Contemplative Spirituality is not Biblical and is penetrating the evangelical church like never before. When I was young in the ministry I use to teach how there was coming a great falling away, how men would one day turn from that which was truth. Today however, I can honestly say, that the falling away spoken of in 2 Thessalonians 2:3 is now taking place and we must therefore ever be on our guard. It is not coming, it is here and it is affecting the true Church.

To have an intense study of this subject two books have been written that will educate us concerning the importance of being on our guard: They are: Running Against The Wind, by Brian Flynn, and A Time of Departing, by Ray Yungen. Both published by Lighthouse Trails.

First, what is contemplative prayer? It is a form of Christian meditation that has come from Eastern religions and is rapidly being received and practiced as a legitimate means of meeting and communicating with God.

1. It is sympathetic to Eastern mystical religions that have nothing to do with Christ. 2. It correlates with occult methods such as using mantra or vain repetitions of key words and phrases over and over again, Matthew 6:7. The use of a mantra is to achieve the silence, and to be a means of pushing away any thoughts of your own. 3. It is not Biblical and should never be used or promoted within the Church.

Contemplative ministry or spirituality expresses that God is in all things and the presence of God is in all religions. There is a connecting together of all things and that through mysticism (meditation) this state of divinity can be recognized. For those who have studied religions you will remember the false message of “pantheism” that expresses all things are God and that God is all things.

Contemplative prayer is emptying the mind through repetition of phrases or thoughts, the putting of your mind in touch with God, so you might hear His Word. Please note that coming to the Father through the Son is not needed according to these proponents of contemplative prayer, and therefore, cannot possibly be justified by God’s Word. Individuals who practice contemplative prayer are said to enter a trance like state that that puts them in communication with God, but you and I realize that such a state would only set us up for the workings, deceptions and attacks of the evil forces.

Unfortunately, through some very popular and accepted authors in our world today, these false truths have been accepted in the Church. Scot M. Peck who has written *A world of waiting to be born* has stated: "A process of emptying the mind is of such importance.... to make room in the mind for new and unexpected things." Do I even have to express to you who will fill your mind if you are willing to empty it? Do you know who has endorsed the cover of this book? How about Al Gore?

When Brian Flynn speaks of "Contemplative Prayer" he expresses: "You still your thoughts...that it puts you in a better position to hear God's voice, guiding, directing, and correcting you."

Taoism, and Buddhism is saturated with "Contemplative Prayer" and Dala Lami who is so accepted here in Madison promotes this kind of praying, and therefore, many in our own local are accepting of this procedure as a legitimate means of reaching God.

Mystical praying is to 1. Silence the mind by focusing on the breath. 2. To silence the mind by focusing on a word or phrase. 3. To silence the mind by focusing on an object.

What "Contemplative Prayer" has brought into the church is an old ancient means of focusing on prayer and taking us into higher and deeper experience through the use of a *Labyrinth*. The *Labyrinth* is a maze-like structure, which was originally designed to connect with God mystically. As participants walk through the *Labyrinth* sometimes called a prayer walk or prayer path, chanting words or phrases, they will reach the center of the *Labyrinth* having centered their souls on God. Those that promote this walk express that any one can walk the *Labyrinth* and reach divinity. It doesn't matter what religion one is, or if he has any religion at all. If, however, this is true, why do we need Christ to reach our Father?

Though this seems far removed from our ministry, you need to realize that this practice has entered the Church today. Youth for Christ offers a *Labyrinth* to its young people seeking God. Some Christian colleges are doing the same, and some large youth programs in churches are doing the same.

Is "Contemplative Prayer" penetrating the church today? Most certainly it is and one way it is penetrating the church is by solid Christian men being used of the enemy to do so. You need to realize that both Dr. Jeremiah and Chuck Swindoll have been sympathizers to this practice and to those who would promote it. Therefore, the falling away is not something that is coming but something that is here, and we must be on our guard, ever watching and ever praying for those who give forth the gospel that it might be kept pure.



## **“Feeding upon the riches of the Word”**

J.W. Sims

When it comes to feeding I would like to begin with the physical feeding of food, for this in its self can teach us a great deal. Feeding upon food is such a primary concern of people today. We have people who make food their life and others who ignore it. Some want to feed upon as much physical food as possible, while others hardly eat enough to keep a bird alive. Needless to say there must be a balance when it comes to the proper amount of food. What we need certainly depends upon our size as well as the kind of work we do. Our size demands greater or less amounts of food and the work we do will also demand greater or lesser amounts of food. When we eat more than what our body needs, or less than what our body needs we are out of balance and need to work on getting ourselves into balance. Eating more than we need is not healthy, but eating less than what we need is not healthy either.

When we properly eat we obtain nourishment, health, life, strength and growth. When we eat improperly we obtain malnourishment, sickness, death, weakness and no growth. Therefore, knowing what we need and sticking to it is very important. When it comes to feeding upon physical food we are to eat what is healthy for us, and not unhealthy. We would not feed upon poison and therefore should want to feed upon that which is good and satisfying.

This lesson however is designed to take these physical things about food and make them spiritual. This lesson is not about physical food but spiritual food. One of the problems today is that people are feeding on all the wrong things in this world to try and find happiness, and satisfaction and as a result they miss Christ and the importance of feeding upon Him for their satisfaction. When it comes to spiritual feeding we do not want to take in so much that we are unable to apply what we take in, nor do we want to take in too little so that we are not able to do the ministry the Lord has given to us. Like physical food there will have to be a balance. We do not want to take in so much that we simply become fat spiritual babies, but nor do we want to be spiritually drained because we give out more than we take in. We need to learn the importance of taking in what we need and what we can apply and what we are able to give out to others. We live in a world where there is plenty of the Word available to us, but too many of us are only taking in what the Lord has given to someone else. Thus we are always listening to the preacher and the teacher, always listening to message, lessons, and reading books. Though this is good, it is not the best, for we as the Lord's children need to obtain the riches not from someone else but directly from Him, for this is the best way to be made and kept spiritually healthy. Therefore, allow me to encourage you to forget the preacher and the teacher who spoon-feeds you and go directly to the Lord and get not the second hand food, but get it first hand directly from the Lord. The difference will enrich your life, encourage you and bring you great joy.

Whatever we feed upon is what we take in, what we obtain our direction, strength and growth from therefore we must ever question what is it that I am

feeding upon? Am I feeding upon what this world offers, or am I feeding upon what the Lord offers? Many are feeding on darkness, pleasure, greed, finances, homes, and sexual things and never finding peace or calmness of heart because they have not learned to feed upon Christ.

Hosea 12:1 is interesting and reads: "Ephraim feeds on the wind" Is this not very expressive of our world and what it feeds upon, for no matter what it is, in the eyes of God it is always simply a feeding on the wind, feeding upon the emptiness of what this world offers.

What we take in, what we feed upon must be very important because this was the very areas that the enemy began in deceiving men, it was with trying to get him to eat, to take in something that God had told him not to take in. It has not changed today for the enemy is still trying to get you to take in what you should not, always trying to get you to feed from the wrong tree, from the things of this world instead of the things of God. In Genesis 3:1-22 we see the word eat referred to seventeen times, therefore in the very beginning with man it was a matter of what shall he feed upon, shall it be the tree of life? Or shall it be the tree of knowledge? There is no greater issue between God and us than what it is we are feeding upon. In the Garden of Eden we were supposed to feed upon the tree of life but instead we fed upon the tree of knowledge and it has ruined our life. It has not changed today, for men still choose to feed from the tree of knowledge rather than the true of life, they choose the system of man's education rather than the simplicity of the cross and as a result they lose their satisfaction and eternal life that only comes through Christ. We each must ask, what, is it that I am feeding upon?" As we look from the Garden of Eden all the way to the New Jerusalem in Revelation 21 we learn that it still will one day be a tree that our Father provides for us to feed from, a tree that wonderfully implies the cross of His dear Son. You see it has always been a matter of what we feed upon and it always will be.

No matter what expressions we might use from the Word to express the importance of what we feed upon and how we need to daily feed upon the Word, John 6:54-58 clearly gives to us the foundation of what a Christian is to feed upon if he is to be healthy and satisfied.

"Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is good indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him. As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so he who feeds on me will live because of me. This is the bread which came down from heaven – not as your fathers ate the manna, and are dead, He who eats this bread will live forever."

There it is as clear as the Bible can make it, feeding that brings health, satisfaction and the hope of eternal life is a feeding upon Christ, a feeding that is

wonderfully implied by the communion service. We must allow the Holy Spirit to give us light and make it clear as to what we are feeding upon? Is Christ alone our salvation and satisfaction?

Once we realize that true spiritual feeding is a feeding upon Christ we will then be ready to receive from Him the riches of His Word as He shares it with us and teaches us how to feed upon it. We will then be able to appreciate how He is concerned that we daily feed upon the Word that He gives to us. As we have pointed out in previous lessons: Christ and the Word are one and cannot in the spiritual sense be separated, Christ came to be the Word manifested in the flesh, and to feed upon Christ and to feed upon His Word has a spiritual oneness.

Jeremiah 3:15 reads: "I will give you shepherds according to my heart, who will feed you with knowledge and understanding." Our Father will be careful to see that His children are fed His Word by His shepherds in such a way that they will receive spiritual knowledge and understanding. Also in Jeremiah 23:4 where we read; "I will set up shepherds over them who will feed them; and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed nor shall they be lacking, says the Lord."

Clearly then, though the Lord wants us each to be able to properly feed upon the Word and obtain spiritual truth for ourselves He is very careful to give to us shepherds who have as their job feeding the sheep. Notice according to these verses He desires to give unto His children knowledge and understanding, how that by His Word He does not want us to walk in fear, to be discouraged and never to have a spiritual lack.

Clearly then, though the Lord wants us each to be able to properly feed upon the Word and obtain spiritual truth for ourselves He will also be careful to give us earthly shepherds who also will feed us. Isaiah 40:11 looks forward to a day when the Lord Himself will feed Israel for there we read: "He will feed His flock like a shepherd; He will gather those who are with young." To be fed by the Lord Himself who is the chief shepherd is always the best way to be fed and one day all of Israel will be gently and lovingly fed by Him, is this not our hope that we should all be fed by our chief shepherd?

Being fed the Word is essential and if there are no shepherds to do the job the Lord Himself will personally do it for the children. Feeding is essential to our spiritual life and growth and therefore we will be fed.

Speaking in a physical sense to individuals who may be concerned about being fed, Matthew 6:26 reads: "Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? At a time when five thousand people were hungry and there was little to eat we see the Lord taking a small portion, blessing it, breaking it and having enough that everyone was filled. So hungry people are a priority of the Lord, be they hungry in a physical sense or a spiritual sense. I happen to

believe that many in the church today are hungry, desiring to feed upon the deepness and richness of the Word, and God's truth. I also believe that the Father will make sure they will be fed if they but depend upon Him.

Through out the Word we learn that God does set aside particular people to be His instruments in making sure that His children get fed. His children are precious to Him and He will ever be careful to see that they are fed His Word, His very presence if you will?

As I close this lesson I would like to turn to Ezekiel 34 one of my favorite passages of scripture when it comes to shepherds and sheep. When you compare Ezekiel 34 with Jeremiah 23 you have one of the richest and eye opening passage of the need of a shepherd ministry than almost anywhere else. It is here that we see that the number one job of a shepherd is to feed the sheep and if that is not done the Father becomes very angry.

V.2 "Woe to the shepherds of Israel who feed themselves! Should not the shepherds feed the flocks? V.3 You eat the fat and clothe yourselves with the wool; you slaughter the fatlings, but you do not feed the flock."

Feeding the sheep is the number one priority and not feeding yourself when you are a shepherd. Eating the fat that belonged to God alone was a terrible insult to the sheep as well as to God, and to clothe your own body from the sheep was a dangerous and unbiblical thing to do.

V.8 "As I live, says the Lord God, surely because my flock became a prey, and my flock became food for every beast of the field, because there was no shepherd, nor did my shepherds search for my flock, but the shepherds fed themselves and did not feed my flock, V.9 Therefore, O shepherds, hear the Word of the Lord! V.10 Thus says the Lord God; behold, I am against the shepherds, and I will require my flock at their hand; I will cause them to cease feeding the sheep, and the shepherds shall feed themselves no more; for I will deliver my flock from their mouths, that they may no longer be food for them."

These shepherds were simply more interested in feeding themselves than they were of feeding the sheep, it appears that they were actually feeding upon the sheep, and the Lord was not going to take it any longer. They had been so bad as shepherds it was if there were no shepherds at all, they not only fed from the sheep they did nothing to direct and protect the sheep therefore they became vulnerable to all the wild beasts.

Finally, because the shepherds were not doing their job the Lord Himself will do the job as we see beginning with verse 13 "I will feed them," Verse 14 "I will feed them" Verse 15 "I will feed my flock" V.16 "I will seek what was lost and bring back what was driven away."

There is just no doubt that if the Lord's sheep are not being cared for by their earthly shepherds, if they are not being fed by them, the Lord will simply take them out of the picture and He Himself will feed them.

As we see, feeding upon Christ, feeding upon the Word is a priority with God. It is such a priority that sending shepherds in helping to do the job is the will of God. Imagine being called to be a shepherd with the number one job you have as being that of feeding sheep but not doing it? Imagine being so busy feeding yourself that you do not feed the sheep. To me the greatest privilege upon the earth is that of being used of the Lord to feed the sheep, what a blessed honor. May the Lord help all who are set aside for this task to make it not only their joy but the priority as well? May each of us ever remember the importance and value of feeding upon Christ as well as feeding upon His Word?

## **“Feeding upon the wind”**

J.W. Sims

We are designed and created by God, we were designed to need food, good food, food that would provide physical nourishment, satisfaction and growth. Now what is true in the physical sense is also true in the spiritual. God designed us so that not only would we need physical food for our physical bodies but also spiritual food for our spirits. As we need good food to be strong and healthy physically we also need food to be strong and healthy spiritually. As we need food that satisfies us and pleases us physically so we need spiritual food that satisfies and pleases us spiritually. That is just the way God made us, for we are not only physical beings but have also been created to be spiritual beings. For us to be happy we must have both.

This is a great deal of the problem in the lives of many people in our world today. They realize their need for physical food but do not realize their need of spiritual food. God however, created us with a spirit and that spirit cannot be satisfied, cannot find peace and fulfillment until it is filled with God’s Spirit and God’s Word.

This brings us to the place I want us to be for this lesson, we are in need of the Word of God, for only the Word of God is able to bring to us the spiritual food we need. We call the Bible the Word of God so when ever you hear me speak of the Word you know I am speaking of the Word of God, for the Word of God is the main way in which it is spoken of to you and I. It is the Word of God in that it is a word directly from God to us, and that is why it is spiritual and that is why it touches us so deeply.

In our day in age men are hungry, deep down within them there is a void, there is something that needs to be filled, touched and satisfied and because of this they search in many different areas searching for what will bring them peace and joy. They search in so many places because they just do not realize that it is Christ, and His Word that alone can fill them.

In Hosea 12:1 we read that Ephraim was feeding upon the wind. Now is that sad or what? What can wind give to any of us? Nothing of course, and yet how many there are today who are feeding upon the wind, something that comes and quickly goes and brings nothing of satisfaction into their lives. We live in a world of wind, of false philosophies, religions, deceptive messages and on and on that will in no way bring what we need for our spiritual lives. Feeding upon the winds of this world can never bring eternal satisfaction or nourishment. It is interesting when you stop to think about it but it was wind that our Lord would often rebuke when it was out of control and bringing turmoil. When you look closely at Hosea 12:1 you discover that they were pursuing the east winds and today we would recognize that what comes from the East would be anything

other than the gospel of Christ, for from the East come Eastern religions that are always misguided and far from the true gospel.

In Ephesians 4:14 **“That we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting.”** Yes, we have got to be enriched by the Word and in the knowledge of Christ so that we will not be tossed by the winds of this world.

It is interesting how many there are who will feed on all kinds of weird and strange things in search of what only the Word of God can bring. When you think about it however, from the very beginning of Genesis we were bound to feed upon something for it has always been the tree of life or the tree of knowledge and both of them required feeding. In Genesis chapter 3 the word eat, ate or eaten is referred to some seventeen times, therefore it becomes clear that food to satisfy us has always been a priority and always the place where we go. Food is an important priority food for our bodies and food for our spirits. Ever since Genesis we have either been feeding upon the tree of knowledge or the tree of life. The tree of knowledge will always simply be wind while the tree of life will always be God's rich food. We need to realize that without Christ feeding upon the educational system of our world is simply feeding upon the wind as far as God is concerned. Is this not why so many who are so educated are so far from faith in God. Once you ignore feeding upon the tree of life and begin feeding upon the tree of knowledge you may never come to Him and your life will always be empty.

What I want to get across to you this morning is simply this, God's Word is God's spiritual food for you and me, it enriches, satisfies, nourishes and brings us to full spiritual growth like nothing else in this world can do.

Turn with me to that wonderful passage in Ezekiel chapter 3:1-2 **“Moreover he said to me, Son of man, eat what you find; eat this scroll, and go, speak to the house of Israel. So I opened my mouth, and he caused me to eat that scroll.”** The scroll of course is the Word of God and Ezekiel was told to open his mouth and God caused him to eat. We need only be willing to open our mouths and God will feed us what we need. Afterwards Ezekiel is told to go and speak to the house of Israel. That is just the way it is with God's Word once you take it in and feed upon it you will desire to share it with others. Matthew 4:4 reminds us of an important phrase we have heard misquoted so many times: **Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.”**

Feeding is very important, it is more than eating; it is taking in something deep down into our hearts, and obtaining rich nourishment and strength. We take it in; chew on and then digest it for a while as we obtain life from God's Word. When we are young in the Lord we are only able to feed upon milk but as we mature we begin to feed upon the meat, ever growing stronger and deeper in the things of the Lord, I Corinthians 3:2.

Now as I begin to close I cannot miss this very important point and that is that Christ and the Word are one. To feed upon the Word in a unique spiritual experience is to feed upon Christ. Christ is the Word, and the Word is Christ. Certainly with our minds we cannot understand this, but it is nevertheless true. In Revelation 19:13 we read: **He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called the Word of God.**”

While speaking of Himself in John 6:54-58 we read:

**“Then Jesus said unto them, verily, verily, I say unto you, except ye eat the flesh of the son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him. As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me. This is that bread which came down from heaven; not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead; he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever.”**

For a non-believer this is a hard saying; it is difficult to understand how one could eat of another person, but as always our Lord is speaking in spiritual terms not in physical terms. To eat from His flesh and to drink from His blood is to spiritually feed upon Christ. He is the bread of heaven come down to feed the hunger of our hearts and He alone is able to give to us the satisfaction we long for.

Though there may be the wind of the Holy Spirit this is not the wind I am speaking of in this message. The winds I am speaking of are the winds of the enemy, the winds I allow myself to feed upon in search of what would bring to me satisfaction. The winds that I am speaking of are winds that must be rebuked, for they are contrary to my spiritual life and growth.

Remember the winds of Matthew 7:25? **“And the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock.”** Winds of life and from the enemy come into everyone’s life and blow upon everyone’s home but when our home and our lives are founded upon the rock of Christ we are able to stand. In the very next chapter of Matthew we see the disciples and our Savior in a boat and there is great fear in the disciple’s hearts because of the wind and they believe they are perishing, but our Lord simply rebukes the wind. This is certainly what we need to take place in our lives, we need the Lord to rebuke the winds, we need to run from the winds, we need to not tolerate any wind in our lives that take us from Christ and that blow us off center.

Do you have wind in your life? Is it a wind from the enemy? Is it a wind you have allowed into your life? Is it a false religion or worldly view? Ask the Savior to rebuke the wind.



## **“Feeding upon the riches of the Word”**

### **Lesson VI**

J.W. Sims

When it comes to feeding I would like to begin with the physical feeding of food, for this in itself can teach us a great deal. Feeding upon food is such a primary concern of people today. We have people who make food their life and others who ignore it. Some want to feed upon as much physical food as possible, while others hardly eat enough to keep a bird alive. Needless to say there must be a balance when it comes to the proper amount of food. What we need certainly depends upon our size as well as the kind of work we do. Our size demands greater or less amounts of food and the work we do will also demand greater or lesser amounts of food. When we eat more than what our body needs, or less than what our body needs we are out of balance and need to work on getting ourselves into balance. Eating more than we need is not healthy, but eating less than what we need is not healthy either.

When we properly eat we obtain nourishment, health, life, strength and growth. When we eat improperly we obtain malnourishment, sickness, death, weakness and no growth. Therefore, knowing what we need is sticking to it is very important. When it comes to feeding upon physical food we are to eat what is healthy for us, and not unhealthy. We would not feed upon poison and yet we want to feed upon that which is good and satisfying. I happen to think that we live in a world that is far too conscious of what it eats be it too much or too little as I think we should find a balance and remain there. One of the reasons we pray before a meal is to ask the Lord to bless that food for the proper nourishment of our bodies.

This lesson however, is not about physical food nor our appetites, this lesson about spiritual food and our need to feed upon the Lord and His Word. One of the problems today is that people are feeding on all the wrong things in this world to bring them happiness and satisfaction and as a result they miss Christ and the importance of finding in Him our satisfaction. When it comes to spiritual feeding we do not want to take in so much that we are unable to apply what we take in. We do not want to take in so much that we simply become fat spiritual babies. We need to learn the importance of taking in what we need and what we can apply and what we are able to give out to others. On the other hand we must not allow ourselves to be malnourished in a spiritual sense. We live in a day when there is plenty of the Word available to us, but too many of us are only taking in what the Lord has given to someone else. Thus we are always listening to the preacher and the teacher, always listening to message, lessons, and reading books. Though this is good, it is not the best. For we as the Lord's children need to obtain the riches not from someone else but directly from Him, for this is the best way to be made and kept spiritually healthy. Therefore, allow me to encourage you to forget the preacher and the teacher who spoon-feeds you and go directly to the Lord and get not the second

hand food, but get it first hand directly from the Lord. The difference in your spiritual life will be night and day.

One of the problems with a ministry such as ours is the richness of it, the way in which it continues to give out the meat of the Word, thus making it easy not to get into the Word on your own. This is one of the reasons why I believe not having Bible studies in the summer is so important for it gives us time to think about, solidify and become hungry for new depth from the Word. I believe that in nine months we give more than most churches give all year. Therefore, we must be on our guard here lest we become too dependent upon what the pastor gives and not dependent enough upon what we personally receive from the Word.

Whatever we feed upon is what we take in, what we obtain our direction, strength and growth from, therefore we must ever question what is it that I am feeding upon? Am I feeding upon what this world offers, or am I feeding upon what the Lord offers? Many are feeding on darkness, pleasure, greed, finances, home, sexual things and never finding peace or calmness of heart because they have not learned to feed upon Christ.

Hosea 12:1 is interesting and reads: "Ephraim feeds on the wind.." Is this not very expressive of our world and what it feeds upon for no matter what it is in the eyes of God it is always wind and wind is nothing but emptiness.

What we take in, what we feed upon must be very important because this was the very area that the enemy began in deceiving men, it was with trying to get him to eat, to take in something that God had told him not to take in. It has not changed today for the enemy is still trying to get you to take in what you should not, always trying to get you to feed from the wrong tree, from the things of this world instead of the things of God. In Genesis 3 from verses 1-22 we see the word eat referred to seventeen times, therefore in the very beginning with man it was a matter of what shall he feed upon, shall it be the tree of life, or shall it be the tree of knowledge? There is no greater issue between us and God than what is it we are feeding upon. In the Garden of Eden we were supposed to feed upon the tree of life but instead we fed upon the tree of knowledge and it has ruined our life. We must each ask, "what, is it that I am feeding upon?" As we look from the Garden of Eden to the New Jerusalem we see there that once again we will feed upon the Tree of Life. Therefore, it is always a matter of what the Lord's children feed upon.

No matter what expressions we might use from the Word to express the importance of what we feed upon and how we need to daily feed upon the Word, John 6: 54-58 clearly gives to us the foundation of what a Christian is to be feeding upon.

"Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is food indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him.

As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so he who feeds on me will live because of me. This is the bread which came down from heaven – not as your fathers ate the manna, and are dead, He who eats this bread will live forever.”

There it is as clear as the Bible can make it feeding that brings health, satisfaction and the hope of eternal life is a feeding upon Christ, a feeding that is wonderfully implied by the communion service. We must allow the Holy Spirit to give us light and make it clear as to what we are feeding upon. Is Christ alone are salvation?

Once we realize that true spiritual feeding is a feeding upon Christ we will than be ready to receive from Him the riches of His Word as He shares it with us and teaches us how to feed upon it.

We will than be able to appreciate how He is concerned that we daily feed upon the Word that He gives forth to us.

Jeremiah 3:15 reads: “I will give you shepherds according to my heart, who will feed you with knowledge and understanding.” Our Father will be careful to see that His children are fed His Word by His shepherds in such a way that they will receive spiritual knowledge and understanding.

Also in Jeremiah 23:4 where we read: “I will set up shepherds over them who will feed them; and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed nor shall they be lacking, says the Lord.”

Clearly than though the Lord wants us each to be able to properly feed upon the Word and obtain spiritual truth for ourselves He is very careful to give to us shepherds who have as their job feeding the sheep.

Isaiah 40:11 looks forward to a day when the Lord Himself will feed Israel for there we read: “He will feed His flock like a shepherd; He will gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them in His bosom, and gently lead those who are with young.”

Being fed the Word is essential and if there are no shepherds to do the job the Lord Himself will personally do it for the children. Feeding is essential to our spiritual life and growth and therefore we will be fed.

Speaking in a physical sense to individuals who may be concerned about being fed, Matthew 6:26 reads: “Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? At a time when five thousand people were hungry and there was little to eat we see the Lord taking a small portion blessing it, breaking it and having enough that everyone was filled. So hungry people are a priority of the Lord, be they hungry in a physical sense or a spiritual one. I happen to believe that many in the church today are hungry, desiring to feed upon

deepness and richness of spiritual truth, I also believe that our Father will make a way that they will be fed.

Through out the Word we learn that God does set aside particular people to be His instruments in making sure that His children get fed. His children are precious to Him and He will ever be careful to see that they are fed His Word, His very presence if you will.

Peter as you will remember in John 21:15-17 was given the responsibility to feed the lambs as well as the sheep. A work that all shepherds are expected to perform today.

As I close this lesson I would like to turn to Ezekiel 34 one of my favorite passages of scripture when it comes to shepherds and their responsibility to sheep.

It is here that we learn that though the number one job of shepherds is to feed sheep that number one job was not being done, and as a result the Father is very angry.

V.2 "Woe to the shepherds of Israel who feed themselves! Should not the shepherds feed the flocks?" V.3 "You eat the fat and clothe yourselves with the wool; you slaughter the fatlings, but you do not feed the flock."

V.8 "As I live, says the Lord God, surely because my flock became a prey, and my flock became food for every beast of the field, because there was no shepherd, nor did my shepherds search for my flock, but the shepherds fed themselves and did not feed my flock." V.9 "Therefore, O shepherds, hear the word of the Lord! V.10 Thus says the Lord God: behold, I am against the shepherds, and I will require my flock at their hand; I will cause them to cease feeding the sheep, and the shepherds shall feed themselves no more; for I will deliver my flock from their mouths, that they may no longer be food for them."

These shepherds were simply more interested in feeding themselves than they were of feeding the sheep, it appears that they were actually feeding upon the sheep, and the Lord was not going to take it any longer. He in fact will take these sheep from these shepherds and when you read the whole chapter you discover that the Lord will deal with these shepherds.

Finally, because the shepherds were not doing their job the Lord Himself will do the job as we see beginning with verse 13: "I will feed them," V.14 "I will feed them" v.15 "I will feed my flock" V.16 "I will see what was lost and bring back what was driven away."

There is no question about it the Lord wants us to feed upon His Son, upon the riches of His Word, He will even use His shepherds in this work, but even if they do not do the job He sent them to do, why than He will step in a do the job Himself.

## **“Early rising and the gathering of manna”**

J.W. Sims

In Exodus chapter 16 we are given practical and spiritual insight, which is rich and often missed by many. It is not easy to be in the wilderness for there you were no longer in the world but you were not yet where the Lord wanted you. You were out of Egypt, out of the world but not yet in the Promised Land, the place of maturity, provision, heaven itself.

Therefore while we are in this in-between place, like Israel we need food, we need satisfaction, nourishment and strength we need God's manna. Today we know that though it was a physical wafer that God gave to Israel, to us it points to the Word of God as well as Christ. As Israel needed manna you and I need the Word of God and you and I need the presence of Christ. We are in the wilderness in that we are between our new birth in Christ and our entrance into heaven, and while we are here we need strength, satisfaction and nourishment for our hunger. If we are going to sustain the spiritual life as we wait our heavenly home we will need God's manna on a daily basis.

The children called it manna because they did not know what it was, and manna simply meant, what is it? Spiritually speaking few really know and understand spiritual things, few understand the spiritual depth of God's Word, or of His Son, and therefore, we must admit that we also could say when it comes to spiritual things what is it?

Many today know no more of Christ than the Israelites did of this manna, but like them they know that Christ is the bread of heaven come down Christ Himself made that clear in John 6:32-34.

If you have never read any of Arthur Pink's writings you certainly should for he gives rich insight into the depth of God's word and his remarks concerning the manna in his book Gleanings from Exodus is wonderful.

As you will remember Israel was always murmuring and complaining in the wilderness; that is what we do best in our transition from earth to heaven, and without God's grace in our lives we can be most nasty. In the wilderness the Israelites kept remembering everything back in Egypt, all the good things about their past life, the same thing new Christians do when they become discouraged.

Well, these Israelites kept remembering the great food they used to have, the food of the world and the satisfaction it brought. They kept remembering those old fleshpots, as well as many other foods.

Therefore, God in His gracious mercy wonderfully provides for His children even when they do not deserve it, and a part of His provision is that precious manna. Manna is to bring to us the satisfaction, nourishment and strength as it caused us to forget all the old fleshy things we once enjoyed in the world.

Let us discuss some precious truths that this manna teaches us:

1. Manna came down from heaven from God. This spiritual manna that we need is not of this earth, it does not come from man, it comes from God and if we do not gather it we will have to trample it. What a blessed truth, for today we either love the manna or we despise it, we either gather it unto ourselves and family or we simply discard and trample it under foot. Those who are not the children consider the manna to be foolish while those who are the children consider the manna to be precious.
2. The manna came to where the children were. You cannot miss the manna if you are the children of God, God will see to it that the needed food will be brought to you, He will lay it before you so that you will have the needed nourishment.
3. Manna is to be gathered. Sure God will place it before you, but you will have to gather it in. You will have to gather the Word, you will have to search the scriptures to obtain your manna, and you will have to take it in, chew it up and apply it to your life. Only in this way will you obtain the nourishment you need. This is what is often referred too as appropriation, meaning taking it in a applying it to your life, making it yours, for manna that is not taken in does no good.
4. When it came to manna it had to be taken in everyday, there was no such thing as left over manna. You and I cannot go without our manna; we cannot tolerate the lack of spiritual food even one day. If we miss it one day we are weak, if we miss it two days we are weaker, if we miss it three days we are becoming spiritually malnourished. God so designed the manna that you could not eat yesterdays manna today, when it was gone it was gone. I wonder all this might mean spiritually? If we do miss some manna that God wanted us to have, is it gone forever? Will He be gracious and give to us another chance? I certainly hope so, but most certainly manna must be obtained daily, we need it to do what He wants us to do and to grow the way He wants us to grow.
5. When you gathered the manna you had to stoop down. Manna was not given in such a way that you could stand when you gathered it, no, you had to humbly stoop, and you had to bend before God to receive your rich provision from Him. Perhaps we all need to humbly come before Him each day to receive the richness of His Word and the presence of His Son.

6. When the manna was taken it had to be used, v.19-20, 24. If you did not use it, it would not keep, it would be melted by the sun. What God wants to give us He wants to be used, applied to our lives and shared with others. You cannot simply leave God's Word for if you do, like the manna it becomes, infested with worms, stink and melts away. Now we know that God's Word never returns unto Him void, we know that it is eternal, but when it comes to us receiving daily what He wants us to have if, we do not receive it, for us it will melt away.
7. Please note that according to verse six, the manna was to help the Israelites to know that they had been brought out of Egypt. Could it not also be that by His Word and the presence of His Son we also know we have been delivered from the bondage of Satan and this world?
8. Please note that according to verse seven, manna was to show forth the glory of the Lord. Is not the glory of the Lord seen in His Son? Is not also the glory of the Lord seen in His Word?
9. The manna was a round, white wafer that was sweet as honey. Small and seemingly insignificant, and yet able to provide all the nourishment that the children needed in the wilderness. God's Word is so small it can be carried and yet it contains all the divine glory and will of God, the Word of God also is sweet to those who love and hunger for it as the manna was made with honey. It also was white reminding us of the purity of the Word as well as the purity of His Son. Yes, without question the manna was a beautiful type of everything you and I find in Christ and in His world as we wait to be ushered into His Kingdom.
10. When it came to the manna you gathered one omer for every man, according to the number of your persons. It has been surmised that in the wilderness there were two million Israelites. An omer was equivalent to six pints. Now according to Arthur Pink, that would come to twelve million pints, or nine million pounds gathered daily, which was four thousand five hundred tons. Hence, ten trains, each having thirty cars, and each car having in it fifteen tons, would be needed in a single day. This would be over a million tons of manna a year and this was done for forty years. Is God a God of rich supply or what?
11. Now as you know the manna had to be gathered early in the morning for God allowed the manna to fall from the heaven at night and it landed upon the dew, v.16. If this manna was not gathered before the sun raised it melted away. That is right, whether we like it or not whether it is difficult for us or not this spiritual process is considered as valid today as it was in the day of the wilderness. God gives His manna, His Word in the morning and he who is wise gathers it in the early morning hours before the sun rises, before the difficulties and

cares of life simply melts it away. I will give another lesson that will discuss this in greater detail but for now let us remember that the best time to receive what the Lord has for us is in the morning hours.

12. Finally concerning the manna it should be remembered that though to the children it was food, satisfaction and nourishment, to others it was not. As the Lord's children His Word is most precious, most of us cannot tolerate going a day without His Word, but for those who do not know Him for those who know not spiritual things it means nothing. Therefore we are reminded of Numbers 11:4-6 where we see that those who were not true children are those who had negative attitudes concerning the manna. **“And the mixed multitude that was among them fell a lusting: and the children of Israel also wept again, and said, who shall give us flesh to eat? We remember the fish, which we did eat in Egypt freely; ...but now our soul is dried away; there is nothing at all, beside this manna, before our eyes.”** Without question, people of the world cannot possibly understand the precious value of the Word of God, it alone is for His children, however, when His children allow the people of the world to discourage us concerning spiritual things even we can be detracted from the precious richness of God's Word.



## **“Early rising and the gathering of manna”**

### **Part II**

J.W. Sims

As we presented in our last lesson manna the food from God had to be gathered early in the morning. God gave it to the children early and He expected them to gather it early. We can question God if we choose but His way was the early way, He desires to give to us before this world eats it up, He wants us to get His food first, before the sun rises and melts it away. Life as we know has an ability to eat at us and to wear us down, therefore the Lord wants to give to us His food and build us up before we have to go out into this world and be melted by its sun.

God chooses to give us His manna in the morning so we need to be willing and ready to rise and gather the food He has given. The early morning is the best time to meet the Lord because that simply seems to be the time He chooses, for He is a jealous God and wants us before anything else can get us. The dawning of the day is the best time to meet with God and through out time it seems to have been the most acceptable time. The early rising has to be a time that we can handle, certainly if we try to rise too early we will become discouraged and give up, so we should not go in the extreme. For me an early rising is 4:00 a.m. but for you it may be 6:00 a.m. the point is when ever we rise if we are not rising early enough to obtain our manna we are not rising early enough. So let us be careful to rise early enough to not only prepare ourselves with showers and food for the day but also with a time alone with the Lord.

As I have previously said: If we are going to rise early we must be willing to go to bed early. We are not expected to go to bed late and then to get up early, it is too much for our bodies as well as our emotions. We need a certain amount of rest that is at least eight hours or a little less and unless we are ill this should be enough for us. It is better to rise early and take a nap then it is not to rise early.

I do not believe in forcing people to rise early, nor do I believe in laying a guilt trip on any one, but could it be that much of the spiritual poverty of the church today is the result of the children not rising to gather the manna? Could it be that the spiritual weakness of the church today is the result of not rising to meet the Lord and gather His word? Is it possible that we do not know the direction of the Lord for our day nor for our lives because we do not daily seek His direction early in the morning?

In an article by Watchman Nee he said that he has never met anyone who was a prayer warrior who was not an early riser? That he has never known anyone who was close to the Lord who did not rise early. We must give to the Lord our best time and our best time is early in the day when we are fresh, not the end of the day when we are worn and weary from work.

If we read anything of the great servants of God we will soon see that they were always early risers, that they rose before the sun to set aside their time, their work and their day before the Lord. These men and women arose early to commune with God, to listen to God to receive His instructions and to carry out His will.

Psalm 63:1 “ O God you are my God, early will I seek thee,” It is interesting to point out that modern translations use the word earnestly, but a correct interpretation can be early will I seek you, I will inquire early with diligence. So there is no question that inquiring early is implied in this passage, something we have no right to take away in modern translation.

Psalm 108:2-3 “Awake, psaltery and harp: I myself will awake early. I will praise thee O Lord”

Proverbs 8:17 “I love those that love me; and those that seek me early shall find me.”

So here we see that David arose early to seek and to praise the Lord, while in Proverbs we even see that God promises that those who see Him early will find Him.

Now as we close we must ask, what do we do when we rise early to meet with the Lord? What should be our purpose in rising early?

1. To commune with the Lord, by that I mean to open our hearts to Him and allow Him to speak to us, allow ourselves to be open and honest with Him and share our feelings.
2. To lift up praise unto His name. We do this by an expression of our lips as seen in Hebrews 13:15.
3. To have a season of prayer and you wait upon the Holy Spirit to lead you.
4. To obtain the spiritual food from God’s Word that we need for the day.
5. To receive His guidance and direction for our day’s work.

Yes, we should be early risers, and yet for many who do not get to the church it is because they feel they need their rest, they need to sleep in, but of course the problem is not because they need to sleep in but because they were up too late enjoying all that this world provides.

**Note the early rising as displayed in the Old Testament by Godly men as displayed in an article by Watchman Nee.**

1. Abraham

And Abraham gat up early in the morning to the place where he had stood before Jehovah. Gen. 19:27

And Abraham rose up early in the morning... Gen. 21:14

And Abraham rose early in the morning... Gen. 22:3

2. Jacob

And Jacob rose up early in the morning.. Gen. 28:18

3. Moses

And Jehovah said unto Moses, rise up early in the morning, and stand before Pharaoh... Ex. 8:20

And Moses wrote all the words of Jehovah, and rose up early in the morning.. Ex. 9:13

And Moses wrote all the words of Jehovah, and rose up early in the morning.. Ex. 24:4

And Moses rose up early in the morning, and went up unto mount Sinai... Ex. 34:4

4. Joshua

And Joshua rose up early in the morning... Josh. 3:1

And Joshua rose early in the morning... Josh. 6:12

So Joshua rose up early in the morning... Josh. 7:16

And Joshua rose up early in the morning.. Josh. 8:10

5. Gideon

And it was so; for he rose up early on the morrow.. Judg. 6:38

6. Hannah

And they rose up in the morning earlyh, and worshipped before Jehovah.. I Sam. 1:19

7. Samuel

And Samuel rose early to meet Saul in the morning.. I Sam. 15:12

8. David

And David rose up early in the morning... I Sam 17:20

9. Job

Job sent and sanctified them and rose up early in the morning, and offered burnt offerings... Job 1:5

10. Apostles

They entered into the temple about daybreak.. Acts 5:21

11. Mary

Moreover certain women of our company amazed us, having been early at the tomb. Lk. 24:22

Now when he was rise early on the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene... Mk. 16:9

Now on the first day of the week cometh Mary Magdalene early, while it was dark, unto the tomb.. Jn. 20:1

And in the morning a great while before day, he rose up and went out, and departed into a desert place, and there prayed. Mk. 1:35

“These scriptural verses all mention about early rising; it was during this time that many things in relation to God’s work and consecration were transacted. God’s best servants both in the Old and New Testaments were all early risers. They all had the habit of communing with God dealing with God, and working for God in the early morning”. Watchman Nee

## **"An End to Self or Our time of Darkness"**

Jerry W. Sims

This lesson is I believe an essential lesson for the children of God. This lesson will assist us in understanding the ways of God in our personal lives. Though it may be a new idea for some of you, it is in fact a working of God that has forever been.

As human beings self is very important. Whether we admit it or not, self is pretty much our priority. Our comfort - our peace of mind - our joy - our safety and our prosperity are pretty much our concern.

When we receive Christ, we do begin to realize that "self" is not to be our priority. We realize it, but even still, because we are human beings we continue to struggle with it. We still continue to be more "self-centered" than "Christ" or "others-centered". It simply takes many years for most of us to really grasp this truth - to come to an end of self.

It takes many years and many dealings from God for us to be willing to let go of our own selfishness and self-centeredness. On the other hand there are many that never seem to yield to God in this area and therefore never come to an end of self. Now all of this is a very important process for many reasons, which I will share as this lesson is presented.

One of the problems that we encounter as Christians is that we think we need to become stronger and stronger so that we can live a better Christian life. We want to meet the standards of God - we want to develop so we can render great service to God. Therefore, we think by our Church attendance - our praying - our Bible study we will be better and stronger as Christians. Though there is truth in this, this is not necessarily the work of God. It is not God's way. It is not God's way to make me stronger so that I can live the Christian life. Rather is it the work of God to allow me to become weaker, while His Son in me becomes stronger. Get the picture?

John the Baptist wonderfully expressed this work, when he said,

"He must increase, but I must decrease." John 3:30

That's it, that's God's way: we become less and less while He becomes more and more. This is the true Christian life.

Realizing this: "That we need to become less self-centered" "That we begin to die to self", "That we need to rely less on self and more on God" will help us to realize why God allows so many difficult things in our lives. He is causing us to be less dependant upon self - less confident in our strength so He will become our victory rather than our own self.

You see, there is only one person who lives the Christian life and that person is Christ. You and I can't, every time we try, we fail. Over the years we must learn this truth, for understanding this truth will bring us to maturity, and cause us to stop fighting God and begin to yield to Him. The sooner we learn this truth the easier the Christian life will become, and the less pride we will have in self. Then our praise will be in Him, rather than self.

As the scripture says, "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 boast." Ephesians 2:8-9

Salvation as well as living the Christian life is not based upon me - not my works - or maturity - or ability, if it were than I could boast. Salvation - living the Christian life is God's grace - God's gift. It is all from Him. Therefore, God needs to teach us some serious truths. God wants it to be His Son through us, and not us.

This is what so many Christians don't seem to understand. What some don't even want to accept? Why? Because this makes the Christian life a very personal on going relationship with Christ that takes away their independence and personal desires. I mean after all this is where the rubber meets the road, this is what the Christian life is all about, "Christ in me," "Living through me." All dependent upon an on-going relationship with Him.

In our lives there will be times of Light. That is, times of joy, peace, happiness and prosperity. These will be good times. We have a sense of well-being - all is well. We are blessed financially, health wise, our family is in tact, and life couldn't be better. This is truly the Blessed Christian life we say to ourselves. This is what walking with God is all about - This is the way it should be. O! be careful Dear Friend.

In Genesis during the time of Creation God did something, which still exists today. He made day and He made evening. He allowed there to be both Light and Darkness. Throughout the Ages there is always light and always darkness. This is true for all of life. For us as well, there will be times of Light and times of Darkness. There is a time of peace and joy and happiness, but there is also a time of suffering pain and difficulty. It is the design of God, and it is always able to bring forth-wondrous fruit in our lives.

In those times of Darkness we learn to reach out and depend upon Him, and it is this that He desires for His children.

You remember Job, a man who in Job 1:8 was said to be a man, who was blameless and upright, a man who feared God and who shunned evil. Obviously he was a fine man, Biblically and Spiritually speaking he appeared to be everything a Christian man should be, and yet the Lord had to deal with him. Even this great man of God was going to experience his time of darkness, his time that would bring him to an end of self. Please look at chapter 30:25-27:

"Have I not wept for those in trouble? Has not my soul grieved for the poor? Yet when I hoped for good, evil came; when I looked for light, then came darkness. The churning inside me never stops; days of suffering confront me.

He wept for those in trouble, and he grieved for those who were poor. Yet when he hoped for good, evil came; when he looked for light, then came darkness."

If the Lord used Job and all of his experiences to teach us that even a good man experiences a time of darkness, that even a good man must come to an end of self, then most certainly the same thing is a real possibility in my life as well.

Finally, as we begin to conclude the first part of this lesson allow me to take you to Numbers chapter 17. In this chapter God wanted to show to all that Aaron was His man. That Aaron was God's spiritual and fruitful leader. God however, chose a very strange way to reveal this.

We love light, light is good. We expect it to bring joy and fruitfulness. God however, sometimes uses darkness not light to bring forth fruitfulness. What He does here with Aaron's rod, is exactly what He did in Job's life and exactly what He will do in our lives.

Aaron's rod is just a dead stick, but it represents the working and power of God in Aaron's life, it represents God's calling and authority in Aaron's life. This rod, along with the heads of Israel was placed into the tabernacle all night long. Like us, the rod must have had some serious and depressing thoughts. It was a time of loneliness, a time when the rod must have felt that its life was over, no longer of use to God, no longer fruitful, perhaps never able to come out into the light again.

O! what a sad and difficult time. Once it was in the light being used and feeling important, powerful and holy, now however, it is all over. No more light, no more fruitfulness. Perhaps it cried out, "I am no longer important."

Little did this rod realize that this would become its most fruitful time - never before had it bloomed, but now when it appears to be all over, As it comes to terms with its own death, as it experiences its own weakness and uselessness it begins to bloom. It begins to bud, it begins to sprout, and it begins to bear forth fruit like it never had before. My friend this is what the Lord is doing in our lives. He sets us aside, He brings us to an end of our own self-confidence, He gives to us experiences of darkness to teach us that it is not "us" but it is "Him" it is His Son. Then like this wooden stick, fruitfulness comes forth, God is glorified, His Kingdom is built and His Son is glorified. This and this alone is the true Gospel.

Please remember that there were other rods in this darkness as well. They however, did not bear fruit. Our time of darkness must be designed and controlled by the Lord. It also must be a time when we yield to the work of God rather than rebel to the work of God. If we grumble and rebel, the fruitfulness of our time of darkness will be most hindered. We must yield to Him we must allow Him to have His blessed desire in our lives. Then like the rod, we too will be most fruitful.

I think that too many of the Lord's children never genuinely profit from the Lord's dealings, from those times of darkness. Why? Because they rebel, complain, and pray with tears that He will remove the very thing that is able to bring fruitfulness into their lives like they have never known before. Be careful dear ones you may be missing all the precious things that He longs to bring into your life.

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As we continue this lesson, allow me to say this: "God's spiritual principle for Spiritual growth is life out of death." It always has been and it always will be. This statement is the exact opposite of what we would expect. It is certainly the exact opposite of what we would personally desire.

As human beings, as Christians we want to live, we want to be full of life. We want to be so full of life that we can do what we need to do, to meet God's standards and to serve Him. According to God, however, His way is the opposite of our way. We have to get this, it is basic to our Spiritual growth.



According to God, fruitfulness comes out of death - out of our times of darkness - out of our dying to self. It hurts, its painful, its full of suffering, confusion and loneliness but O! how it brings forth fruit.

In John 12:23-28 we are given the experience of Christ. Death was the will of the Father for Him. By His death He would take upon Himself the sins of the World.

As Christ had to experience a physical death, so we must experience a death of our own "self", our "old flesh" our "Own self-centeredness", our "Own self-confidence." As Christ's death would bring Spiritual fruit unto all people for all time. So our dying to self will bring forth fruit unto Him and unto others.

Notice that in verse 23 Christ speaks of His being glorified. A glorification that will be the result of His death and resurrection. God's spiritual principle is seen for us in verse 24, a principle that was even applied to His own son.

"Unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain."

Here is the key to Ministry. Here is God's way for all His children. If you want to bare fruit, if you want the Church to multiply, you must, like a grain of Wheat be willing to fall into the ground and die. This is unfortunately the main thing that Christian refuses to do. We don't want to die to our ideas - our desires - our works. We want to live and every time God brings things into our lives to deal with us, and to bring us to an end, we holler, we argue, we run and we rebel. We pray, "O God! Take this away for it is more than I can bear." Very few seem to see the hand of God and quietly submit to His work.

When the wheat falls into the ground it is in a place of darkness. No longer in the light, no longer high up above the ground looking down on the less mature. It is now dark, lonely and useless. It's a terrible place, its an awful time but in the midst of it just like Aaron's rod, new life begins to bud. New fruit like you have never produced before begins to come into your life and reach out to others.

Verse 25 makes it clear how we as a Christian can hinder Spiritual growth in ourselves and in the Church.

"He who loves his life will lose it, he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life."

He who loves his self-centered soul life will lose it for all eternity. But he, who will allow his self-life to die, will keep his life for all eternity.

v. 26 " If anyone serves me, let him follow me: and where I am, there will my servant be also."

If you want to serve Him you will have to follow Him. Where is He going? To His death. If you truly want to be used of Him there are no short cuts; you will have to die to self. You will have to learn to totally depend upon Him, not self. Is this something easy for Christians to do? Man it's the worse. Look at Christ in verse 27:

"Now my soul is troubled, and what shall I say? Father save me from this hour. But for this purpose I came."

You see, even for the Savior it was difficult, but He realized that the will and purpose of God had to be fulfilled. Yes, this was the purpose of God for His son, and it is the purpose of God for you and I.

This Christian, Biblical view is so different from the World's view. The World say's: "live your own life, do your own thing, you only go around once so get all the gusto in life you can." God say's, "If you really want the best, if you want eternity with Him let go of self."

Matthew 16:25 says it this way: "Whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it."

How different is God's way. When we give up self, we gain, when we try to hang on to self we lose.

Paul has much to say concerning this issue that is important if we desire to be used of God. If we expect to have a genuine Ministry that will bring forth fruit unto God we need to grasp this as a reality in our lives.

2 Corinthians 4:5-12 is a blessed passage concerning Paul's Ministry and the hardships he experienced. Ministry and hardship go together. It is God's way; it is also the result of Satan's work and the World's attitude.

When you begin with verse 8 please note:

"They were "hard pressed but not crushed"  
"They were "perplexed but not in despair"  
"They were persecuted but no forsaken"  
"They were struck down but not destroyed"

"Always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also might be manifested in our mortal flesh."

Genuine Ministry always carries with it the death of the Savior, for without His death there would be no life. And it is this carrying that brings about the blessed work of verse 12:

"So then death is working in us, but life in you."

Do you see it dear friends? Do you see God's way to genuine fruitful Ministry?

Death works in me, that life might work in you. As I die to self, the Lord can come through and produce life in you. How badly this work is needed in the Church today. God's cross works to do away with all that I am so that God's presence may come forth and produce life in those to whom I minister. No death working in me than no life working in others.

In I Corinthian 1:9 Paul explains the purpose of death working in us:

"Yes we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves but in God who raises the dead"

As the process of death and darkness works in me, it causes me not to trust in my self, but to trust in God. I have to trust in Him to do what I am unable to do. Please note how Paul inserts that God raises the dead. Yes Lord, I am dead, unable to live the Christian life, to serve you and to bring forth fruit. Therefore, I look to you to bring forth-Spiritual life and fruit through me, by your life. I look to you to bring life out of death.

Please turn with me to I Corinthians 5:14-15:

"And He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again."

Because of Christ we no longer are to live a life for ourselves, it is now not my life, but His. It is now no longer my will but His.

As Galatians 2:20 reads: "It is no longer I that live, but Christ that liveth in me."

How blessed and precious are these truths, and yet how ignored by the modern, strong and intellectual Church. My friend it is not us: not our strength, not our wisdom or spirituality, it is nothing but Christ within.

Perhaps the following illustration may help you understand what it is I am trying to say, and what it is the Lord desires to bring about in our lives. Some years ago I had many tomatoes on the vine that would not ripen and the weather was becoming cooler and cooler. A friend told me to take all the tomatoes off the vine and to wrap each one of them and to place them in a dark place. I did this, and over a period of time they each ripened and became beautifully orange and ready to eat. You see my friend there are just times when the Lord puts us away for a time of darkness, He just sets us aside for a time as He allows the darkness and the loneliness to produce fruit in our lives. Praise His blessed name!

Perhaps, as we learn this truth we will realize why we sometimes hurt so much, why we sometimes feel so useless, deserted, and lonely. It is all within the plan of the Lord. He knows what He is doing in my life as well as in yours. Sure it's difficult, it's painful but we must remember that He is preparing us for what He desires us to be for eternity. He knows how to ripen tomatoes.

Understanding this will hopefully bring us to the place where we will willingly yield unto Him and His work. If we learn to yield the Christian life will be easier for us as we will not be fighting against the Lord and our spiritual growth will be rapid. If we are not willing to fall as a grain of wheat, fall into the ground, then just perhaps God may have to allow a few things come into our lives that will force us to fall. This will be most painful; therefore we must learn to willingly enter our time of darkness that we might enjoy our time of Light.

Bless you dear ones and may your time of darkness be only for a short while and may your new spiritual fruitfulness be for all eternity. Please remember that if one does not yield to the work of God in this area, if he fights and rebels and struggles against what God is bringing about through the darkness then he will only increase the need as well as the time in his darkness.

In His Service,

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## **“Dangerous Times”**

J.W. Sims

As we observe our world and the way things are going it causes us great concern. So many things seem so wrong, so violent, and so cruel. Life has become so cheap so worthless, that people take lives for a few dollars, for a special jacket, or even just for the fun or thrill of it. At a time when we may have felt that we would have progressed to better people who would rise above uncleanness, ungodliness, and grossness we have actually fallen deeper into sin and ugliness. At a time when we would have expected to progress intelligently to the point of receiving respect from our young, things have actually gone in the opposite direction.

What can be wrong? What has happened? Why did education and all our modern inventions not bring us to a greater development? Well, of course all who are Christians, and have an understanding of the Bible understand perfectly. Biblically speaking the Bible has always made it clear that in the latter days it would become worse not better. Why? Because the problem has never been our lack of education or our lack of modern invention or facilities, the problem has always been our hearts. The problem is spiritual. The further we are from God, the more hardened we become, the more rebellious, and mean. God has told us in His Word that this is what would take place in the latter days before His Son returns.

II Timothy 3:1-17 is a passage of scripture that gives to us a list of clear characteristics of people in the last days just before Christ returns. To pick up this passage and to carefully examine it is like reading a modern day newspaper, or listening to the radio.

### **V. 1 “This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come.”**

The word perilous is used in many different ways in many different translations of the Bible, and yet each wonderfully express to us the way it will be just before our Savior returns.

1. Difficult times.
2. Hard Times.
3. Troublesome Times.
4. Dangerous Times.
5. Stressful Times.

It is easy to see, is it not? That all of these words accurately describe the days in which we live, days that are difficult, hard and troublesome days, days that are both dangerous and stressful. Notice that the passage reads that we “should know” that we should be aware of, that we should understand the days in which we live. Yes, we need to be aware of the times; like it or not we must observe

what is going on in our world so that we will be prepared to present Christ and so we will be prepared for His coming.

As we continue it does not take Paul long to get right to the source of the problem. Yes, we live in dangerous days, but why? What makes them dangerous?

### **V.2 “For men shall be lovers of their ownelves....”**

It does not take long to see where the problem is, for the problem is with man himself. The center of man has become “self” not God, not Country, not others, but “self.” When “self” becomes the center of your life, than everything you search for will be for self, for the pleasure of self and for the enjoyment of self, for everything revolves around self. Verse four continues along this theme where we read: “lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God.”

If you love yourself, loving pleasures will soon follow. When your priority is self, your priority will be obtaining all the pleasures of this world for yourself and when that happens God and everyone else simply falls by the wayside. That is of course why we read: “rather than lovers of God.” Man cannot love himself and God at the same time, for when you love self there is not room for the love of God.

As we continue this study let us closely examine each word that is used and the characteristics of man that we can expect to see in these latter days in which we live.

**V.2 “Lovers of money”** or covetous as some translations say will be a major problem in our world. This is not hard to understand for if a man loves himself and the pleasures he can obtain for himself the love and desire of money will have to fall into place. I Timothy 6:10

**“Boasters”** or braggers will be found among those who love themselves, for they will always want to tell you what they think of themselves. They are good-looking, they are strong, and they are intelligent. These folks are arrogant, and they are loud and they do not mind telling anyone all they are, therefore these folks are easily discovered.

**“Proud”** This individual is very closely related to the boaster. He is, however, not easily detected. He is very quiet and subtle concerning his pride. Like the boaster he is proud but his pride is hidden. He sits and quietly thinks to himself that he is wonderful; he is talented, so spiritual, so much better than those around him. Therefore, on the outside this individual appears to be sweet and wonderful, while on the inside he is full of pride and condemnation for others.

**“Blasphemers”** The word is insulting, and these folks seem to take a great deal of pleasure in insulting people, and hurting their feelings. Perhaps as they tear others down they lift themselves up. These individuals insult God, and they insult man. You will remember that the only unforgivable sin is to insult the Holy Spirit.

**“Disobedient to parents”** Without question one of the serious problems of today is this characteristic. In the last days, the scriptures teach that our children will be disobedient; Children who will just not naturally obey their parents will become a prevalent reality. How we see this everywhere today, and O how it breaks our hearts. Certainly a part of this is the direct result of children being raised by parents who love themselves rather than other or God. Parents can be so self-seeking of personal pleasure that they ignore the children and their needs.

**“Unthankful”** How often we see this characteristic in our society today; Its with those we work, it’s with those we live with; It is an attitude of I deserve this rather than I am thankful for this. Individuals who have this attitude believe they are worthy of having this or that, and therefore are not thankful, and cannot even say thank you to those who reach out to them.

**“Unholy”** This word has to do with decency, and would express that in the last day’s men will be indecent. These individuals are gross, and they involve themselves in things that are not accepted by society. They go beyond what is considered normal, and involve themselves in what is considered abnormal. Are we not shocked at what is going on in our nation today? The gross sexual things, the indecent and unholy perversions that are placed before us on Television, radio, music and reading material? The uncleanness of our world is beyond what our grandparents could imagine and yet our society tolerates and allows it to continue. Yet as tragic as it is, the Lord said this is the way it would be in the last days before His Son returned.

**“Without natural affection”** or unloving as some translations might say; right away we think of homosexuality but that is not what is meant here for it is a word used to describe family. It should be read: “without family affection.” In the last day’s men will be so self centered so concerned for selfish pleasure that the natural love of family will fade. How quickly we are losing what God feels is normal; like husbands and wives loving each other and having affection toward one another; children loving and having affection for parents, and parents loving and having affection for their children is something that no longer is normal for we are rampantly falling into un-natural affection within the family. How else can we possibly understand how children kill their parents and how young parents either abort their babies or simply discard them into trash heaps? This problem of “without natural affection” is a big one and it is rampant for even our homes are now torn apart by this evil and Godless characteristic that is all around us today.

**“Trucebreakers”** or traitors as some translations might read, for in the latter days you will not be able to take a man at his word. Look at the contracts and signatures for agreements today; and it is all because men can no longer be taken for their word, they simply will break agreements in these last days. The whole idea is that we have come to the place where we are afraid to trust people



where as years ago if a person said something in agreement it was as good as any signed contract.

**“False accusers”** or slanderers as some translations might say and it indicates that in these latter days we live in we will see a lot of individuals who slander others for the pure pleasure of it, individuals who are willing to even falsely accuse others. These slanderers will falsely accuse others simply for the purpose of destroying their name, their jobs, their homes and even their spiritual testimony.

**“Without self-control”** is a big problem that is everywhere in our world today. What is happening in the area of loss control is of no surprise to our Lord for He told us through Paul that such days were going to come. These individuals will be slaves to their own lustful passions; all sorts of things that have taken control in their lives will bind them up. How many there are in today’s world who seem to have no control over the things that bind them, people need to be brought into the victory of Christ that they might break from the things that hold and bind them.

**“Brutal”** or fierceness will also be something that we see all around us in these last days. This is a very strong word and means savage; it is someone who is so overwhelmed by the enemy that he is fierce and brutal more like a beast than a man. Is this not the only way we can understand some of the things that have been done by men, savage things that are more animalistic than human? It is the men who have become spiritual beasts that are capable of things that are beyond our comprehension.

**“Despisers of good”** is perhaps one of the ways that we can understand why there is so much badness in our world, and why so many turn from and try to hurt those who stand up for what is good. It is so sad that we have lost the basics of goodness even to the point that those who are good are despised.

**“Having a form of godliness but denying the power thereof.”** This phrase is perhaps one of the saddest for it indicates that these individuals are religious, that they have the appearance of being godly. Probably meaning these folks can be in churches giving the appearance they know and love the Lord but have no real knowledge of the power of God for they have never met Him. Religious yes, but real in that they are truly led by the Holy Spirit’s power, no; These folks are certainly not true, just religious.

**“Always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.”**

Head knowledge these folks have but genuine experience by having met Christ and come to the truth, absolutely not. Head knowledge never brings us to truth; only a genuine moving of the Holy Spirit in our lives is able to do that.

## “Creeps in Jude”

J.W. Sims

As we continue our study concerning the latter days and those men we need to be on guard for we will do so in the book of Jude. It is interesting to point out that when Peter speaks of these men he tells us in verse one of chapter 2 in 2 Peter that there shall be false teachers, while in Jude verse four, Jude says for there are certain men crept in. Therefore, we conclude that Peter says they are coming and Jude says they are here. Just think very early in the church age, probably 30 to 50 years after Christ men were coming into the church to bring a false and perverted message.

Note please that in verse 4 we are told that certain men crept into the church and it is Vernon Magee who calls them creeps. I guess that is pretty accurate for they are spiritual creeps who have come to spread falseness into the church. Because of these men who were in the time of Jude and who are more so in our time we need to heed verse 3” **That ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.**” This important verse is for all believers today, we must struggle in agony, and we must be determined to keep the faith the way the faith was given to us.

The reason we have to contend for the faith to keep it the way it was given to us is because there are men who are trying to bring falseness into the church – therefore be on your guard and keep working to keep the faith what the faith is.

These men are condemned men they are condemned because of their spiritual condition as well as their message. They are condemned because through out the Word they have been spoken against. They never caught God off guard for He knew they were coming and He knew they would be judged.

1. Ungodly men who turn the grace of God into a reason as to why men can indulge themselves in any sin they desire.
2. Filthy Dreamers because they are men who minister out of their dreams and visions rather than out of the Word of God. The

Bible has a great deal to say concerning those who would minister from their dreams rather than from the Word of God. As a result of their dreams they defile the flesh, theirs and those they minister to, and just like the men in 2 Peter they despise angelic dominion and speak evil of spiritual authorities. These men are perhaps the men today who justify homosexual activity and approve of those who have this lifestyle even within the church.

3. They speak evil of the things they do not understand. These men are not spiritual men and therefore do not understand spiritual things – “for the natural man receiveth not the things of the spirit of God, neither can they know them for they are spiritually discerned.” That is why we see that what they know naturally as brute beasts is what corrupts them. These men are corrupted and they corrupt those they minister to.
4. They are spots in your feasts – perhaps when you gather together for communion and for potlucks of fellowship you have these men who rather than spots are hidden rocks like the rocks that are hidden in the sea and able to damage to the ships that cross them.
5. Clouds without water – If there is anything a cloud should contain it is water, but like beautiful clouds that are empty of water so these men are empty of the Word and though they may have the promise of giving the water of the Word, they are dry and withered, so that no one receives. Like clouds they are carried about by the winds of life, not the work of the Spirit.
6. Trees whose fruit is withered without fruit. If there is anything a fruit tree should give, it is fruit, but these men have withered fruit, or no fruit. Matthew 7:20 tells us that by their fruit you shall know them, these men have no fruit.
7. Twice dead, plucked up by the roots. Dead spiritually and therefore they will be dead physically. Imagine men who are dead spiritually trying to lead others spiritually?

8. Raging Waves of the Sea, foaming out there own shame. These men rage about many things, but they do not give the Word. They are simply waves that are blown by the wind, perhaps making a great deal of commotion and stirring up a great deal of trouble but no real spiritual value. If anything comes out of these men it is simply foam that comes out of their own shamefulness.
9. Wandering stars – If you are a star with a purpose with a path to follow that is good, but if you are a star that is just a wandering star with no purpose and no path to follow that is very sad, and serves no purpose; Who, would want to follow a wandering star? For these men there is a reservation of blackness of blackness. We do not like to think about hell, very few know very little concerning it and very few preach about it in our world, but this passage speaks of hell, not just the fire of hell, but also the blackness of hell. I suppose that few of us ever pause to think that the scripture speaks of hell as a place of darkness, darkness like no other.
10. Murmurers – Complainers – Walking after their own lusts. These men are never satisfied, and therefore they are always Murmuring in low, mumbling sounds. They also complain About everything and anything. As we have seen in 2 Peter They are men who live according to their own flesh, after there Own desires rather than the desires of God.
11. And their mouth speaketh great swelling words, having men's persons in admiration because of advantage. These men do anything to sound good to others; with their words they praise and exalt others as a means of gaining advantage. Imagine being a preacher saying great things about people so they would say great things about you.
12. Mockers – walking after their own ungodly lusts – They mock God but the way they live in that they live lives that do not Acknowledge God.

13. They separate themselves – These men divide and separate The body of Christ, they separate themselves from the true Children and they separate true children from true children.
14. Sensual – these men live sensual lives meaning they live a life And promote a life that is all about “I” all about self. It is an Egotistical way of living where an individual becomes all Important and where a ministry promotes the person, where I Comes first.
15. Not having the Spirit – Is this not the whole problem with these Men who are false teachers within the church? They have not The Spirit of God.

## **“Creeping Creepers”**

J.W. Sims

There is a book in the New Testament that few have read and even fewer have seriously studied. It is a book that is for these latter days and therefore should receive our greatest attention here in America. It is the book of Jude and is found just before the book of Revelation. Won't you please follow along with me in this wonderful and heart stirring book of the Bible.

Through out time we have had to be on our guard concerning Satan and how he might try to deceive us. It is his desire to get us to accept false truths as if they are true. One of the things he has always done and will more intently do as time passes is to use men who seem to be good and spiritual to give a message that is not right, that is not spiritual and therefore a message of darkness. In the book of Jude these kinds of men are spoken of and therefore demand our attention.

**V.3 “I found it necessary to write you to exhort you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.”**

Now if Jude who wrote his little letter back in the early days of the church thought it necessary to exhort Christians to contend for the faith, how important do you think this book is for the day that we live in? We must be careful that the message of faith preached today is the same one delivered to us initially. Therefore, in our ministry we must earnestly contend for the faith. Every day we need to strive to keep the message just the way it was given to us, just the way it was delivered to us.

**V.4 “For certain men have crept in un-noticed, who long ago were marked out for condemnation.”**

Certain men have secretly crept into the Church un-noticed, un-detected. Who knows how this happened? But it has happened and the problem today is much greater than ever before. We did not test the spirits as we were told to do in I John 4 and some of them got in. Please note that these men who came in are men who are marked for condemnation. Just think, these are condemned men ministering in the Church. They are not sent by God, but by the enemy.

The truth of how this happens is seen in 2 Corinthians 11:13-15:

**....”False apostles, deceitful workers transforming themselves into apostles of Christ.” Note that God did not make them apostles but that they were making themselves apostles.**

**“And no wonder! For Satan Himself transforms himself into an angel of light, therefore, it is no great thing if his ministers also transform**

**themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be destruction.”**

Difficult to imagine is it not? Ministers in positions of the Church who are not ministers of God at all, but ministers of the Enemy. They are not ministers of righteousness but of un-righteousness. Why I wonder do we think of this only as a problem in Jude’s day and not a problem in our own? This is a problem for us in the American Church today. We have allowed men who do not know the Lord and in fact are from the enemy to come in and serve in positions that they have no right to have. Please note that their end will be destruction. First we saw that they are condemned and now we see that destruction awaits them and we have allowed them to minister in our churches. May the Lord open our eyes that we might see?

Let us now return to verse 4 of Jude where we continue to read: **“ungodly men, who turn the grace of our God into lewdness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ.”**

If you deny God as well as His Son you certainly will be ungodly. Maybe they do not publicly do this, but in their hearts they certainly do. I am amazed what I sometimes read concerning what men in the mainstream ministries of our day believe, such things as: God does not really control everything, the Word of God is not really from God, the Bible is not really without error, Christ really was not from a virgin birth, Christ is not really Divine, it is not important whether you turn from your sin once you receive Him. And it simply goes on and on, men turning from the solidness of the message that was first delivered unto us. Why Christians with any discernment at all would tolerate these men and give them support is beyond comprehension. We need our eyes opened and we need to come out of such false ministries.

Notice what they do: **“They turn the grace of our God into lewdness.”**

This means that they take the wonderful message of grace and they twist it, they say that grace means no restraint, that grace allows us to do whatever we want to do, that because of Grace anything goes. Can you imagine any easier way of corrupting the Church than this? And yet that is exactly what is taking place today within the Church. These certain men express we can be a Christian and live any way we desire. Do you realize how many Churches are buying into this false message? This is the message of tolerance that is running rampant in our land and has even saturated our Churches. It is if you study the Church age carefully a characteristic of the last day Church the Church of Laodicea.

Jude wants us to know that God has always dealt with those who needed to be dealt with, and He will therefore deal with these men as well.

V.5-7 He destroyed those that didn't believe, He put angels in chains that did not keep their proper domain, and He dealt with Sodom and Gomorrah.

**V.8 “Likewise also these dreamers defile the flesh, reject authority, and speak evil of dignitaries.”**

These creepers are like all these others and they will be dealt with. Like the shepherds of Jeremiah's day in chapter 23 they are dreamers who preach and work out of their own dreams. When you look closely at this word dream it has with it quite a surprise for it actually speaks of that which is sensuous and fleshy so that these dreams actually defile their flesh. They literally are staining and making their own bodies muddy with sexual and fleshy sins. As near as I can tell these men who are ministering in the Church are living improper lives sexually speaking. Now at the time I am writing this the Roman Catholic Church itself is having a terrible time with those who are in high positions but living by the kind of dreams that are being spoken of here. May the Lord open our eyes, not only so we will see, but also so that we will deal with the problem.

Notice also that these creepers reject authority. Authority in regard to God and the Church is vital; everything is set up to yield to God. These men however, believe they are beyond submitting to authority. No one will tell them what to do or how to minister; they themselves will be their own authority. We have seen this a lot recently and once again I am afraid we have seen it in the Roman Catholic Church as they pretend to even be above the law of man. Also, we see one of the strangest statements in this passage as it expresses that they are even men who speak evil against dignitaries. What does this mean? These men have no respect or submission to anyone, not even evil created beings of God. Why even Michael the archangel would not rebuke the devil when he fought him for Moses' body, but said: “The Lord rebuke you.” This is important for it reveals that Michael would not rebuke even a down trodden evil being that was created by God, but these men they don't care for they do not see any thing as being powerful and under the authority of God, they can do anything they want to do.

**V.10 “They speak evil of whatever they do not know; and whatever they know naturally, like brute beasts, in these things they corrupt themselves. “** What they have no understanding of they rebuke, and what they have understanding of, like animals they corrupt themselves in. How can we comprehend that these kinds of men are within the Church, often in key positions of leadership? May God have mercy upon the Church today?

**V.11 “Woe to them! For they have gone the way of Cain, have run greedily in the error of Balaam for profit, and perished in the rebellion of Korah.”**

Cain was a murderer, and by the falseness of these men in ministry they are murderers as well, for they are murdering the children of God. Cain murdered his sweet God-centered brother Abel because Abel went the way of God the way



of shed blood for forgiveness of sin. Cain however, offered up the works of his own hands. These creepers are like Cain in that they do not go the way of the shed blood of Christ but rather by the works of their own hands. These men that have come into the Church un-noticed have thrown out the value and necessity of Christ's shed blood and replaced it with the need of works as they try to earn their salvation.

Balaam preached for profit, his ministry was a ministry of greed. Do you think there are any Balaam's today? Men who preach and minister for money? Dear friends the Church is full of this kind of ministry and they preach the prosperity message to others, corrupting the whole Church.

Finally, Korah represents rebellion for it was Korah who rebelled against Moses in the wilderness. These men have a ministry of rebellion for they submit to no one; they are too big, too vital to important. These men live in a spirit of rebellion, a rebellion that can be felt by those with discernment. They do not submit but they expect to be submitted to.

**V, 12 "These are spots in your love feasts, while they feast with you without fear, serving only themselves. "**

The word spots used here is not a good word and should be interpreted as being Men that are like a rock in the sea, or better yet like a ledge or reef that you could get caught on. These are men like reefs that you can get caught on, men who come to your love feasts or potlucks, your times of communion without any fear. They are men who serve themselves, not the Lord nor others. Do you remember what Paul said in 2 Corinthians 4:5? **"For we do not preach ourselves but Jesus Christ the Lord, and ourselves your bondservants."** Paul did not preach himself, he did not point people to himself, we are not to be served by you, for we came to serve you. How far different was the ministry of Paul from the ministry of these creepers.

**"They are clouds without water, carried about by winds; late autumn trees without fruit,"**

What good is a cloud without water? What is the purpose of a cloud if it has no water? These men are like clouds that have no water, they have nothing to give, nothing that will enrich, refresh, quench a thirst or produce any water for fruit and growth. They are simply empty clouds, clouds that are carried along by the winds of the world and not by the Spirit of God.

They are trees that have no fruit and produce no fruit in others. No matter how they appear; now matter how educated or eloquent they simply have nothing to give in the eyes of God.

**“Twice dead”** it reads here: Its one thing to die physically but another to die spiritually. These men are going to die physically and they are already dead spiritually.

The Annotated Bible says: “They are dead twice because they are dead spiritually but also because they are dead in Apostasy, in their turning from the truth of God.

**“Pulled up by the roots”** A pulled up root cannot be in hope of ever being fruitful for it is detached from the supply of life. These men are uprooted and without hope of redemption or restoration, they are lost. Just think about that, they are lost but ministering in the Church.

### **V.13 “Raging waves of the sea, foaming up their own shame.”**

Raging waves are powerful and can bring a lot of damage, raging waves are very noisy but raging waves stir up the bottom of the sea and only bring up what is there. These men, will by their raging bring up the corrupted shame that is within them, they will one day be known for what they are.

### **“Wandering stars for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever.”**

These stars remind us of the same stars we have seen in the First chapters of Revelation, the stars over the Churches who were designated spiritual beings and human shepherds were designated and placed by the Lord.

These men however, are not placed for they are wandering stars, they are stars who give no light and because they do not they are reserved for blackness and darkness forever. How sad, that the men who should know and preach the light of the Gospel are reserved for darkness forever.

Verse 14 expresses something that we know very little about and that is that Enoch who walked with God had written a book, a book that was never accepted as being a part of the Word of God. Apparently the book of Jude was not accepted for many years because of the mention here of Enoch’s book.

As our lesson continues we see additional characteristics given to us concerning what type of men these men are.

**V.15 “Ungodly”  
“Ungodly deeds”  
“Committed in an ungodly way”  
“Harsh things have been spoken against them”**

**V.16 “grumblers”  
“Complainers”  
“Walking according to their own lusts”  
“Swelling words” “flattering people to gain advantage”**

We were told, we were cautioned that such men would come, why I wonder, do we forget how important it is to realize these things in our day and to be on our guard? Why do so many who know better not only connect themselves with these men but also support them in their work?

**V.18 “Mockers”  
“Walking according to their own lusts”**

**V.19 “Sensual persons”  
“Cause divisions”  
“Not having the Spirit”**

There it is again, sensuous and fleshy men who divide the Body, men who have not the Holy Spirit. Imagine! Men who do not even have the Holy Spirit and who live by the flesh rather than by the Spirit who are leading, directing and supposedly building the Church?

So here we have a little book that is neglected at a time when it is needed perhaps more than ever be for. Let us pray that God's men will bring out this little book once again and will pray over and preach it so that we will have discernment and so that we will be on our guard for men who have brought in a false message that denies the Lord and preaches a tolerance for a sinful life. May we remember, it is one thing to have sin in our life and to have confessed it but another to live in sin and preach that it is acceptable because of the grace of God?

## **"Piercing Persons"** **Jerry W. Sims**

For the past two weeks in our Sunday morning lessons we have looked carefully at such things as persecution and suffering among the Lord's children. We have seen how such things are a part of the Christian life and how the Lord uses them to enrich and prepare our lives for eternity.

From those lessons we came to this lesson which I feel can be a serious difficulty that we often have to live with, work with, and sometimes even have to go to Church with. There are people who are just prickly people and therefore are very uncomfortable to be around. They are the piercing persons by their words, attitudes, looks and presence. They prick our hearts, our minds, and our spirits. They are the people who hurt and wound others. They are brash, and often speak piercing words. Many times they know they do, sometimes they may not even realize it. Some of these people are just totally and completely always piercing people, while some have on an occasion been used to pierce. Our world is full of people like this, and you cannot live here without coming into contact with them. The sad thing about this is not only are they in the world but they are also in the Church. Piercing personalities that hurt the children of the Lord and bring damage, and disharmony to the Church. Piercing persons are tools in the Enemy's hands to hurt and discourage the children of the Lord.

Ezekiel 2:2-6 expresses to us that God called Ezekiel to a ministry of piercing persons.

**v.6" Do not be afraid of them nor be afraid of their words, though briers and thorns are with you and you dwell among scorpions; do not be afraid of their words or dismayed by their looks, though they are a rebellious house."**

Now lets carefully look at this passage to see what the Lord is sharing with us. Ezekiel is sent to minister to a piercing group of people. They are spoken of as a people of briers, thorns and scorpions.

Briers and thorns are prickly and able to pierce what ever they come into contact with. They penetrate and cause serious pain. If even a small thorn is allowed to remain in the flesh it continues to grow worse and worse causing infection and greater pain. Soon all you think about is the pain that is created by that thorn by that piercing that has come into your life. Therefore we learn that it is one thing to have been pierced but it is another to continue to be pierced by the same thorn or person year after year. It is a pain and an infection that must find help. We have all been pierced and no doubt can even right now remember a piercing that took place ten years ago. All of these piercings however must be dealt with they must be brought to the Lord for His withdrawal and healing. If we have pierced we must ask forgiveness, if we are pierced we must bring it to the Lord and leave it there lest it poison our whole spiritual life. As we have stated there is a piercing from the world, but there is also a piercing from the children within the Body. Needless

to say the piercing that comes from the world is expected but when it comes from a Body member it is overwhelming. Though we expect to see it in the world we never expect to see it in the Body. When we do it is always from those children who are hard, bitter, angry, stubborn and out of fellowship with the Father.

Please note that there were also scorpions spoken of here. They also can prick us, but when they do so, they put poison into us. O how many there are who put poison into the minds and hearts of others, hurting and cutting down others and poisoning the minds and hearts of children against children. Certainly this kind of piercing breaks the heart of our Father for it so damages and separates the children in the Body.

Please notice Ezekiel 2:3-4:

**" I am sending you to the Israelites, to a rebellious nation that has rebelled against me....v.4 The people to whom I am sending you are obstinate and stubborn."**

As the Lord first spoke to Ezekiel He made it perfectly clear as to the kind of ministry he would have; it was a porcupine ministry. A ministry to the thorns, briars, and scorpions, is not a ministry that any one desires, and yet that was Ezekiel's. Could it be yours? Could it be mine? Please notice that before he was told they were scorpions, briars and scorpions he was told that they were rebellious, obstinate and stubborn. So what are the piercing persons that we meet? They are the rebellious and the stubborn, they are those who are not following the Lord but who are walking in anger, and rebellion against the Lord and His children.

Remember however, what the Lord said to Ezekiel:

**"Do not be afraid of them, nor be afraid of their words...do not be afraid of their words or dismayed by their looks though they are a rebellious house."**

Yes, people will hurt us, without and within our ministries. We however are not to be afraid; not of their words, nor even their looks. We are not to even be discouraged for they are a rebellious people. Is it not interesting how the Lord points out that even their looks are a factor? Piercing people look harsh and angry as if they could easily pierce and do damage to you. Unfortunately my experience tells me that piercing persons are in the world and in the Church especially among those who are out of fellowship with the Father.

Ezekiel 34:21, has some important light concerning this issue. It is tucked within a passage that deals with the ministry of a shepherd to his sheep. Here however, we seem to have a verse that shows just how sheep can treat sheep.

**"Because you have pushed with side and shoulder, butted all the weak ones with your horns and scattered them abroad, therefore I will save my flock...and I will judge between sheep and sheep."**

Here we see in a ministry sheep pushing, thrusting, and butting the weak sheep with their side's shoulders and horns. The process hurts the weak sheep and

scatters them. How would you like to be in a ministry such as this? When you are, it is most difficult to have rest, peace and joy. It is almost impossible to develop in the Lord in a ministry like this. I can honestly say, when sheep who pierce and butt others leave a ministry a whole new preciousness and sweetness develops that allows the Lord to move in a new and fresh way.

**Proverbs 12:18 speaks of reckless words that pierce like a sword."**

Have you ever been pierced? How long did it take to heal? Did you hang onto it, or bring it to the Lord so that He could take it away? The interesting thing about having been pierced is I am certain that each one of us can remember a piercing that we experienced even ten or fifteen years ago. This is what we must be careful of, we must not hold on to those piercings that will keep us bitter, and cut us off from fellowship with the Lord and with the person. Have we pierced anyone and never dealt with it? This too creates serious problems in our hearts and leaves something that needs to be dealt with before the Lord and before the one we have pierced. Piercings have brought grave damage within the Body of Christ that the Enemy has used to damage, separate and divide the Body, and we must ever be on our guard for this tool of Satan.

Let us ask where did this problem come from? How did piercing persons get their start?

The problem began very early in man's life for in Genesis 3:17-18 we learn that as a result of man's disobedience to God, God cursed the ground, and said, that thorns and thistles would now be the result. That's right, thorns and thistles in life are a direct result of man's disobedience and rebellion.

Thorns and thistles will forever bring forth hardship, pain and difficulty in this world. It is a fact of this life.

But is there not special help from this terrible problem of thorns? Most certainly there is and it is found in the only place where it could be found, turn with me to Mathew 27:29

**"When they had twisted a crown of thorns, they put it on His head, and a reed in His right hand. And they bowed the knee before Him and mocked Him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews"**

What man had used to mock Christ, our Father uses to reveal a wonderful spiritual truth. By a curse came the thorns, but the cross took them away. This is the blessed significance of the crown of thorns, for when they were placed upon His head He was revealing that by the curse came thorns, but by the cross are the thorns of life and the piercings of people dealt with. How blessed was the work of the cross. Have you accepted the work of the cross as your answer for the thorns of life?

There are other areas of thorns that we could look at, but in this lesson we will keep our study in this area. Please remember that we all have the potential to

pierce someone, be it on purpose or accidental. We must ever be on our guard for this problem. We also will meet people who are simply a thorn, it isn't that they pierce here and there, they simply walk as a thorn and as such no one can ever comfortably get close to them without being pierced. Soon they have no one close to them, for everyone begins to shy away from them rather than suffer the pain of them. Thirdly, when you are pierced you must come to the Lord for His healing and relief, otherwise your piercings may cause you to become bitter and hard not just for awhile but for many years. May the Lord bless and enrich you in His love, and protect you from all the thorns of life.

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It is a joy to share with my friends some of the lessons the Lord shares with me. In the past months we have been having more requests for the Vineyard and for this we give thanks. As the Lord provides we make these lessons available to you. We are prayerful that they minister to you.

## **“Deception and the latter days”**

### **Lesson I**

J.W. Sims

If there was ever a time in history for the children of God to be on their guard, it is now. Sure there has always been deception when it comes to spiritual things, but today as we approach the end times it has multiplied a hundred times. No doubt as time passes it will multiply another hundred times as the enemy does his best to draw men to himself and away from the Christ. There are several passages on my heart that I will carefully and prayerfully present as I work to expose the tactics against the church, tactics, from the enemy, and from men who say they know the Lord and His Word when they do not.

**2 Timothy 4:3 “For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry.”**

Here is why we need to be on our guard during these latter days, and that is because we have come to the time when men will not endure sound doctrine. Today we live in a time when men will not put up with true healthy doctrine from the Word of God. Men do not want the truth, what they want is to have their itchy ears scratched, in other words they want their ears tickled with those things that are pleasing and encouraging. Therefore, they heap or literally accumulate and seek additional teachers who will give them what they want.

They will turn from the truth and turn unto fables or tales of fiction rather than the true Word of God. Therefore, we are urged to watch, to be discreet concerning what we are taught, to endure afflictions, hardship and trouble, because they will certainly come to those who are willing and desirous to give and receive the true Word of God.

**1 Timothy 4:1-2 “Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron.”**



The Spirit of God speaks clearly and distinctly that in the latter times, the times that I believe we are presently living, we can expect that some will depart from the faith, literally removing themselves from the faith a word that could mean deserting the faith which could even have the connotation of revolt. This is what we refer to as the last day's apostasy and seems to be with us today. Now when these folks do this they will give heed, or adhere to deceiving spirits. Whether they realize it or not does not matter as that is what they are doing, and in most cases I do not believe they will know what they are doing. You see, they have turned from the faith and in so doing they have turned to deceiving doctrines or false teaching from the enemy; Man just always has to have something to hold on to. Along with this verse it is important to remember 2 Thessalonians 2:3 **"Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come except there come a falling away first."** As Christians we need to realize and we must be on guard for a defection from the faith, when people, yes, even people within the church will forsake the faith.

Let us now turn to 2 Peter chapters 2 where we learn how vital it is that we walk in discernment in these latter days knowing that there will be men, false teachers who will be used to lead us astray if we are not careful and dependent upon the Holy Spirit

**"But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction."**

False prophets in the Old Testament and false teachers in the New Testament for the enemy is always able to find men who are willing to deceive God's people for a price. Be it fame, exaltation or money men will take spiritual positions to promote falseness of doctrine to deceive men and to detract from Christ.

William Barclay in his Daily Study Bible points out some important truths concerning these false prophets that are worthy of our time. To begin with false prophets were more interested in gaining popularity than in telling the truth. Their policy was to tell the people what they wanted to hear. They spoke of peace, peace when there was no peace. False prophets would express there was no captivity to come when God had made clear captivity in Babylon was certain.

False prophets were interested in personal gain and would teach for hire, Micah 3:11, which of course would remind us of our New Testament hireling who leaves the sheep when the enemy comes. A false prophet often has a life that is not right; he may speak one thing while he lives another. The false prophet is a man who is willing to lead others away from God instead of closer to God.

Please note that these men are among the people; somehow these men had gotten into the church. They are not on the outside looking in and trying to bring damage, no, they are within the church somehow through the work of the enemy and our lack of discernment we have allowed them entrance into the church among the children of the Lord.

Years ago I taught the book of Galatians to learn how the enemy does his best to lead us away from the freedom we have in Christ and in that study we learned in chapter 2:4 how there were false brethren who had infiltrated, smuggled into the church in order to spy and learn about the freedom in Christ so as to bring the children into bondage. Therefore, we learn that this tactic of the enemy is nothing new; he works to bring non-believers into the church in order to bring damage against the church. I am certain that today we need to have open eyes concerning what is going on within the church, sure we need to watch the attacks from the outside, but today it is from within that most of the damage will take place and the same is true concerning us as a nation.

This tactic is also seen in the book of Jude, which is a book that wonderfully parallels our study in this 2<sup>nd</sup> chapter of Peter and which we will incorporate into our lessons. Please note verse four with me: **“For there are certain men crept in unawares who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.”** Here again, we see certain men who have crept into the church, meaning that they lodged stealthily within the church, some how they crept into the church among believers who should have had enough discernment to know who and what they were. The phrase indicates that they settled along side the believers to bring about their spiritual damage. Please note that they had already been condemned, even before they began their work, so

the indication is that these men are reprobates, unable to be saved, men who have denied the Lord and God, and the Lord Jesus Christ. These men work to turn the grace of God into lasciviousness. This is very serious and something that we would not expect in the church but which we are asked to be on our guard for. These men will turn God's people from the grace of God to wantonness, which means they will assist them in believing that living like they want to live is just fine, it brings them to a readiness and acceptance for all pleasure. Therefore, anything and everything goes, do what ever you desire without restraint. Years ago we would not for one moment expect that this kind of attitude could possibly be within the church, but today I think it is pretty prevalent and it has all come through these men who have crept into the church, men who are already condemned. The same thing is seen in verse 18 of 2 Peter chapter 2.

Now, because of the things we see in our world, because of the verses we have presented in this lesson we see the importance and value of Jude 3 **“Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.”** Apparently, Jude had intended to write a different message than he actually wrote, for he had planned to write some important basic truths concerning salvation. But the Holy Spirit took hold of his heart, and he had to write that we must earnestly contend for the faith, the foundational, true, pure faith that was originally given to us. If ever there was a time when we must contend for the faith it is in the day and age that we are presently living in. What does it mean to earnestly contend for the faith? It means that we must be willing to fight for, to strive and struggle for the foundational faith that was given to us. You see, as times passes maintaining the foundational faith is not just a given, it will be a daily struggle for the people of God to keep it and to promote it even in the church. Yes, the days we live in and the days that will continue are days that will require the true believers to earnestly struggle to keep the faith in the church and in their lives. May our Father be gracious and give us discernment and strength to keep the faith.

## “Dreamers and Deceivers”

J.W. Sims

As you know I have been concerned with the type of things that are being presented to and within the church. We live in a day when spiritual discernment is so needed and yet so neglected, when we need to walk in light but we walk in darkness. It seems the enemy has brought people to the place where they have accepted that we have come into a newer and deeper truth than we have ever had before, that he has convinced people that there is a new way of building the church and a new way of getting what God wants us to have from life.

As you know I have presented some material concerning the Purpose Driven Church a method of building the church that is designed by man and not by God, a method that leaves out the work of the Holy Spirit. The openness of the church to this modern day method is what I believe is leading us rapidly into allowing entrance of the New Age movement. As I have studied the falseness of this method I have been blessed by the book Deceived on Purpose by Warren Smith and have learned how saturated all of this is with Satanic deception and an evil darkness that is so subtle that few in the modern church discern its danger. As I have studied this book I have also learned how wrong and off center Bruce Wilkinson has been in his books the Prayer of Jabez and the Dream Giver. Now you need to remember that the book the Prayer of Jabez has been widely distributed and accepted in Christian circles and yet it is saturated with New Age and evil possibilities, so I ask, “What is happening to the church today? Where is our discernment? Why do the supposed Christian people not understand what is right and what is wrong when it comes to spiritual things? Though I have never read the book I knew in my spirit it was not from the Lord and should not be accepted into my mind.

The book that I want to dwell upon however is the second book that Bruce wrote and that is the book The Dream Giver. If you have not read this book great; don't read it for it will take you into paths that are off center, that are full of New Age thinking and that will cause you to be deceived. This book is all about the “Big Dream” and how you have to connect to God's big dream so that you can go from being an ordinary person to being a person who is somebody.

According to Bruce our dream will evolve and it will grow into a bigger dream. He sets himself up as a dream coach who will guide you into your dream. As Bruce has spoken to the Saddleback church he has told them how they need to open their hearts and prepare for the dream that is coming a dream in my opinion that is simply setting us up for a one world religion as well as the entrance of the antichrist. Now you need to understand that there is a oneness between Neale Walsch a person who writes material that connects people to evil spirits, Jerry Jampolsky who has written a course entitled “A course in miracles” that is totally New Age

and sets us up for deception, and Robert Schuller, and Rick Warren and finally Bruce Wilkinson. What I am trying to say is that we have gone from a foundation of satanic forces, to a new age message in Schuller to a modern day acceptance of the Purpose Driven Church. Therefore, no matter how you look at it, evil deception has been watered down, and watered down until it has been made acceptable within the church. And guess what? All over this country however are the Lord's children who have discernment and will not be deceived. There are the Lord's children who because they sense this kind of material is off base are rising up and not accepting and even rebuking where this is being brought. There are others however, who sense something is wrong but are not sure what it is and though they are unhappy they accept what is being presented and remain where they should not. It is time for the children to take a stand or to remove themselves from wherever this falseness has come.

Now just in case you think Robert Schuller has a nice ministry, allow me to quote from his book entitled: Self-Esteem the New Reformation:

"I am not fully forgiven until I allow God to write his new dream for my life on the blackboard of my mind and I dare to believe I am therefore I can" Do you realize how close this is to calling yourself the "I am"? The name that only belongs to God, the "I am" the Yahweh.

"God's forgiving grace is incomplete until he gives me, and I accept a new kingdom building dream and opportunity."

"I must accept the dream God gives me and develop its inherent possibilities."

It is my purpose by this lesson to encourage you as the Lord's children to be on your guard, to be alert, to use the discernment that God has given to you. We were told by our Lord to remember that there would be those who would work to deceive us, that there would be false christs deceiving even the very elect if it were possible. Yes, deception is real and in these latter days deception will be a real and intense work of the enemy. We need to evaluate every book in the Christian bookstore and every message that is presented to us as the Bereans did in regard to Paul. Every message by a popular pastor who has thousands of people following him must not simply be accepted as from God, every book that has sold thousands of copies does not make it a spiritual book from God. Therefore, I want you to be careful to slow down, to observe, to pray and to rely upon the Holy Spirit and the Word of God when it comes to your acceptance of what is being presented. We will in these coming days see a great deal that is religious presented to us and we will perhaps live to see the day when coming into this one world religion is the entrance of the antichrist.

As I now take you to the Word it my purpose to share with you that the Bible has a great deal to say about how God will present to us spiritual truth by

the use of dreams. He did it in the Old Testament and it is clear from His Word that He will do it in these latter days. In Acts 2:17 **“And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh and your sons, and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams.”** So we know that dreams are not bad and can truly be of God.

The dreams we are having presented in modern day books however, are not of this kind, they are not dreams from God but dreams from men, they are dreams that will cause us to go the way of the enemy and to be caught up in the coming of the antichrist and therefore I say, be careful, watch, and be on your guard, test the spirits and know whether or not they are from God. The kind of dreams that are being presented to us today and the kinds that on occasion the Father spoke of in the Old Testament are not the same.

Turn with me to Jeremiah 27:9 **“Therefore, hearken not ye to your prophets, nor to your diviners, nor to your dreamers, not to your enchanters, nor to your sorcerers, which speak unto you saying, ye shall not serve the King of Babylon.”**

As you know God had told Israel that they would be in bondage to Babylon, and yet there were spiritual leaders who were telling them they would not be. Men who were preaching the opposite of what God was saying. Now these men were preaching a popular and an accepted message but it was not the message of God. Notice the kind of things we see in this passage: divination, enchanters, sorcerers and dreamers. Notice the kind of things that go with these dreamers for they are sorcerers, diviners and enchanters. These are all forbidden things by God; they depend upon the stars as well as the enemy to give forth their message. We cannot receive a message that is from the enemy for if we do it will destroy us. Today, I ask you where do you think these messages on dreaming the dream of God and connecting to God’s dream come from? They are of course from the minds of men as the enemy controls them.

It is very interesting to note that this word dreamer means to dream or to cause to dream, because dreamers cause other people to dream. It is also interesting to point out that it means to bind; amazing isn’t it, that these dreamers are binders, for they bind people up with their dreams? Finally, there is the indication that this word means a “sense of dumbness.” What a terrible indication of our world today that the receiving of these kind of dreams may very well come from a sense of dumbness, that in fact they probably create a spiritual dumbness within the body.

Jeremiah 23:28 is a wonderful passage concerning the spiritual problems that shepherds were having in Israel and gives us wonderful light concerning how we should be as shepherds. In verse 28 however, we read: “The prophet that hath a dream let him tell a dream; and he that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully. What is the chaff to the wheat: saith the Lord.” Our Father says in this passage to those who say they have a dream, go a head and give that

dream, and those who have my Word, go a head and give my Word. What is the chaff, what is the outer shell compared to the inner shell, compared to the wheat? God knows that these false empty dreams that men want us to accept are nothing, and cannot compare to His Word, for His Word is meat, His Word is truth and richness and those who are His will always know the difference between the dreams of men and His Word. So I express to you go a head allow them to preach from their dreams for through out our country, through out our nation those who are the true children will not be deceived for they will know His Word and will run from these dreams. Wherever these New Age methods are coming into the church, wherever men are expressing that we need to connect to the dream, wherever they are teaching we must follow the dream these false messages are dividing the true children from the false. Today in churches around the country where these things are entering the church true children are raising up against it and so causing turmoil or they are simply leaving and finding a solid Christ centered and Word centered ministry. As I close, I urge you not to be deceived but to rest in the discernment that has been given by Christ and if you find yourself being caught up by the things that are being presented, then I pray that God will give you light that you might know true salvation and not simply religion.

## “Delusional Days”

J.W. Sims

This lesson is only a short portion of a message I recently presented but it is so important that I wanted to place a part of it on our web page. What we see taking place in our nation is of serious concern. It appears that many in our nation have no normal understanding, knowledge or perception as to what is light and what is darkness. They seem to accept what is wrong as if it is right, and what is right as if it is wrong. Our nation is without discernment concerning what is false and what is true. It reminds us of Isaiah 5:20-21 **“Woe unto them that call evil good and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter! Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight.”**

If this is not our nation in our day, I surely do not know what verse describes us any better. This is what our leadership in America is doing to its people in these last days, Politically, and Spiritually this work is being seen. All around us, men we work with, family we live with and God forbid even individuals we attend church with are living this verse. They call evil things, good and they call good things evil, they call light darkness, and darkness they call light and what is bitter to them they think is sweet. Like this verse they rely upon their own wisdom and prudence rather than relying upon God.

This is a serious problem today, and believers, those who know and walk with the Lord see things for what they are. They immediately know the light from the darkness, the evil from the good and the sweet from the bitter. The believers have understanding, light, knowledge and discernment concerning what is happening in our world politically and spiritually. They are not fooled and they are not confused. They know when truth is being given to them and they know when falseness is being given, they know when the message is a wrong message and they know when the message is the right message. Politically, God’s children know how to vote and Spiritually God’s children know who is giving truth.

God’s children have discernment because God has given discernment to them. As I John 2:27 tells us, we have been given the anointing of the Holy Spirit and because we have we need not be



taught by man, for we know what is right, we know what is truth and what is a lie. Therefore, believers are just devastated by the inability of non-believers to see. We use to believe everyone could see, and judge things without confusion, but as time has passed it appears that no one can see, or discern, that everyone about us is in confusion.

What has happened in these last days? What is going on that is causing people to be overwhelmed in darkness, and confusion? I believe we are experiencing what God said would come in 2 Thessalonians 2. In verse 10 we notice that there is such a thing as all deceivableness of unrighteousness, and it is a deception that comes from the working of Satan. We notice in this verse that it comes to those who have not received the love of the truth that they might be saved. As we continue with verse 11 we read that God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie. Now we see a work of deception from Satan among those who have rejected the truth as well as a sending of delusion from God Himself that will cause men to believe a lie. This I believe is what is taking place in our nation today. The enemy on one hand is deceiving us and God is sending us delusion or deception on the other. Notice, this is not to a believer but is to those individuals who have rejected the truth. What does this delusion lead men to? It leads them to believing a lie. In our day men readily believe a lie, they have a tendency to believe a lie because of Satan's deception and God's delusion. No wonder we are in so much difficulty accepting what is evil as though it were good, and accepting light as though it were darkness, and coming to the place where we have no ability to make right decisions when it comes to direction of this nation and the choosing of a president. We must always remember that when an individual rejects the truth of God He will believe any falseness that comes. What do you think the ultimate lie might be? What will this delusion ultimately bring? I believe it will bring non-believers to the place where they will receive the falseness of the antichrist as if He is the Christ, for this is the ultimate lie of all time. Yes, we must be on our guard for we live in the delusional days, and therefore, darkness, lack of understanding, confusion and the believing of a lie are all around us.

## “Discipline and the hand of God”

J. W. Sims

Here is a lesson that we have all experienced, but perhaps do not like to admit. We do not like to think that our Heavenly Father needs to deal with us, as we need to deal with our children. If we become children of God than He becomes our Father and as we are responsible for dealing with our children so is God responsible for dealing with us. We probably do not often think about it, but often the reason we have problems in our lives is because like a child we are doing things we should not do, having attitudes we should not have and going in directions that are not safe or good for us. Like children we can be naturally rebellious and therefore in order to keep us straight and get us to move in the direction that is uplifting and maturing God has to deal with us. Like children we often want what is not right, and God has to set us straight. Like children we have the ability to do what we want to do and to sass God when He corrects us. Therefore, there are all kinds of things we can learn about how and why God deals with us by watching our children and how we must deal with them.

The Bible depending upon your translation uses the word discipline, or to chasten. It is an important word and means lots of different things: To restrain, to put in check, to make correction, to rebuke, to punish, or even to give instruction. I think God does a lot of this in our lives but we are not often sensitive to it. What comes into our lives we blame on life, people. Work and so on without realizing that what we are experiencing is from God, who is trying to discipline us and keep us going in a right direction as we grow from a child to an adult.

Let us first turn to the foundational passage of our lesson that is found in Hebrews chapter twelve. In verse five we read: **“My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; V.6 for whom the Lord loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives.”**

When the Lord disciplines us, and He will do so He does it because He loves us, just as we discipline our children because we love them. Every normal Christian parent who dearly loves his children deals harshly with them when they are out of line because they love them. The children who are not loved than are also the children who are not disciplined. When the Lord disciplines us we are told not to despise it, not to disregard it, or to have little regard for it because the son He receives is the son He will deal with. We are also told not to become discouraged: When you are being dealt with by God we are not to become discouraged because it shows that God loves us and that we are His children. Many of us become discouraged when we are being disciplined by God, when things in our lives are tough, but we should not for the Lord knows just what we need to keep us straight and bring us to maturity. The same is true if you are a child who is being dealt with by your parent; don't become discouraged for such things are a testimony that your parent loves you.

This word scourge is a harsh one, for it means “to flog”, have you ever seen anyone flogged? It is most painful, but for our use we will simply say, “whip” for it can mean a whipping. We do not live in a world that believes in whipping and because of it we have children who are out of control. Today we are to reason with our children, not whip them and yet in the Biblical world a good whipping is quite in line with God’s view.

**V.7 “If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten?”** In the real world, men who are dads and moms who are mothers chasten their children, so why would we think it would be different from our Heavenly Father? Sometimes as children we have to endure the discipline of our parents, and sometimes as Christians we have to endure the discipline of our Heavenly Father, it is just a fact of life. I can only pray that when my Father disciplines me, I will have wisdom enough to know from where it comes.

Many of us as children would probably like to think that living a life without discipline would be great, for than we would have the freedom to do anything we would like, but please look at verse 8 **“But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons.”** We are truly the sons of God if we have come to Him through Christ and therefore we are chastened – Because God is our Father and we are His children He will always be dealing with us, like it or not. He deals with us and directs us, and punishes when we are wrong because He is leading us in a right direction, that will safeguard our lives for all eternity, the same as we do our best to safeguard our children and lead them in the way of submission, gentleness, sweetness, and a moral life.

**V. 9 “Furthermore, we have had human fathers who corrected us, and we paid them respect. Shall we not much more readily be in subjection the Father of spirits and live?”**”

As we have had human fathers who corrected us and we gave them respect, should we not also have respect to the living God? Should we not live in subjection to His correction?

**V.10 “For they indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed best to them, but He for our profit, that we may be partakers of holiness.”**

When we are children it seems like we are under the control of our parents discipline forever, but to the Lord it is just a few days, and for those few days they chastened us as seemed best to them. When it comes to the correction of the Lord however, it is that we might profit forever in regard to being partakers of His holiness.

**V.11 “Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.”**

Who of us does not realize this? Being dealt with by parent or by God is no fun, it is rebuke, restraint, it is being kept in check and being prevented from doing what we want to do therefore at the time it is most painful, but the end result is most blessed for it ends in peaceable fruit of righteousness for those who have been trained by it. Here is of course what discipline is, it is training, firm, strong, training, a training that sometimes even requires the whipping that is by the control of the Spirit and not the flesh.

There will be times when while being chastened by the Lord we feel we are dying, but it is not the purpose of the Lord to kill His children, only to bring them to maturity. Please look at Psalm 118:18 **“The Lord has chastened me severely, but He has not given me over to death.”** When the Lord is disciplining the various things in our lives we may feel we are dying but as David here says, though he severely chastened me but He has not given me over to death. The Lord’s discipline always brings us to spiritual life; sure it may bring our fleshy nature to death, but not our spiritual nature.

Proverbs 3:11-12 **“My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord, nor detest His correction; for whom the Lord loves He corrects, just as a father the son in whom he delights.”**

The Lord knows that when we are corrected we will have a natural tendency to despise that correction. We are that way toward our parents and we are also that way toward the Lord. To despise His correction is to have disregard for it, to not pay attention to and therefore to continue as we were. This is most dangerous for us in our physical lives as well as our spiritual lives. Discipline is for correction that we will be kept from doing that which will harm us and take us into wrong paths. Please notice that this verse makes it clear that to be corrected by our father is to be corrected because he delights in us, He delights in us and loves us. If we are fortunate to have a father who takes delight in us we will receive correction, and if we are the delight and love of our Heavenly Father we will receive His correction and we should rejoice in it.

When it came to Israel the reason they had so much difficulty was because they disregarded the discipline and correction of God.

Jeremiah 17:23 **“But they did not obey nor incline their ear, but made their neck stiff, that they might not hear nor receive instruction.”**

As the Lord’s children we must understand that discipline is normal and is to be expected. Correction, rebuke, restriction and punishment will come into our lives from the hand of the Lord as naturally as discipline will come from our parents as children. As children who must submit to our parent’s correction without becoming rebellious, so must we learn to do the same when our Heavenly Father corrects us? Believe me, this is the easy way, this is the way that is full of joy, peace, comfort and richness for it always leads to life. The other way only leads to a life of difficulty, pain, unhappiness and death.

## **“Discipline and the hand of God”**

### **Part II**

J.W. Sims

Discipline is an important and necessary part of life for everyone, whether we are non-Christians or not discipline is needed to assist us in maturing from child to adult. When we are Christians however we will not only have the discipline of our parents but we will also have the discipline of our Heavenly Father. I am sure that I do not have to share with you that the problems we have today with our children is the end result of not having discipline in our homes and schools as we once did.

We need to expect discipline from our parents and we need to expect discipline from our Heavenly Father if we are Christians. Therefore, we should also see the need of yielding and submitting to this discipline knowing that it is for our benefit, knowing that it will keep us safe and lead us to a right and healthy life.

As parents we are responsible before God to properly discipline our children to make sure that they are not given freedom to do as they please when we know it is wrong and damaging to their lives, when we know that the direction they are taking is simply self-centered, selfish, and rebellious. Discipline of a child should help them see wrong from right and how the world does not revolve around them. Discipline should also keep them moving toward God and assisting our children to see that there are others that they need to give in too, care for and yield too. If we do not firmly deal with our children in discipline but rather try to reason with them, in a very short time we will lose them to the world and to the enemy. We must remember this: “God is a God of discipline but Satan is a god of rebellion.” This is why our children are naturally rebellious and this is why we must discipline and not give up because we are soft, tired or too weary.

It is amazing how much of the best thoughts of Biblical disciplines are found in the book of Proverbs a book written for the son of Solomon, a book that wonderfully gives wisdom about life to us all. When it comes to discipline concerning our children there are all kinds of ideas today. Certainly we are not near as firm and controlling as we once were and the results of that are seen throughout the land. Parents seem to have given up their place before God and seem to allow the children to have control of their lives. Children scream, holler, and manipulate until they get what they want rather than parents controlling the situation and bringing peace into the home. Too many homes are in turmoil and have no peace because the children are controlling everything. This is not God’s way because when a child gets his way he generally ruins his life and the lives of those around him.

Proverbs has much to say concerning the value of discipline, a value I believe that comes from God disciplining us, as well as from our parents disciplining us.

Allow me please to just quickly share a few insights from Proverbs concerning discipline, please remember that the word instruction can also mean discipline.

Proverbs 10:17 **“He who keeps instruction is in the way of life, but he who refuses correction goes astray.”**

Proverbs 12:1 **“Whoever loves instruction loves knowledge, but he who hates correction is stupid.”**

Proverbs 13:18 **“Poverty and shame will come to him who disdains correction, but he who regards a rebuke will be honored.”**

Proverbs 15:5 **“A fool despises his father’s instruction, but he who receives correction is prudent.”**

Proverbs 15:32 **“He who disdains instruction despises his own soul, but he who heeds rebuke gets understanding.”**

Proverbs 22:15 **“foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child; the rod of correction will drive it far from him.”**

Here we see the advantages of submitting to discipline as well as the result of not submitting to discipline. I feel sure that this is true not just for children of parents but also of Christians to the Heavenly Father.

Let us now look at what for many is a very unacceptable plan for the disciplining of children but yet has a Biblical foundation that is just as necessary today as it was when it was given to us.

The Bible has much to say about using a “rod” in the lives of our children in order to discipline them and keep them straight. The consequences of not applying the “rod” is weakening our nation and causing it to become corrupt and dangerous.

The word “rod” I am sure means different things to different people, and some will never accept it as a means of disciplining children. When Proverbs speaks of a “rod” it is speaking of a “rod of correction”. It is a branch or a stick used in punishing. Children must be punished in a way that helps them to quickly get it, so that they understand what is acceptable and what is not.

In the Old Testament you have often heard how I have taught that the “rod” represents authority, and I think though I cannot say for sure, that perhaps there is some element of truth here when it comes to disciplining our children, you must have the authority and you must use it. Children do not have the authority in our homes, only the parents do. So parents set down the laws and apply them, for parents rule and children submit and that is just the way it is.

Is this “rod” simply symbolic or are there times when a proper spanking is Biblical and necessary? I think that the Lord wants us to realize that yes there is such a thing as using a “rod”, a branch a stick for disciplining of a child.

It does not take much for the child to get the message, it is not something that needs to be used when the child matures, It is the initial use of the spanking to assist the young child who has no understanding how to know right or wrong behavior, as the child learns and grows the need of this kind of “rod” will soon pass. Then, I believe a different kind of “rod” can be used. The longer however we put off the use of the “rod” the greater will become our problem and we will lose control of our children.

Proverbs 13:24 **“He who spares or withholds the rod hates his son, but he who loves him disciplines him promptly.”**

If you love your son you will use the rod, and if you hate your son you will not. If you are going to discipline, you need to do so immediately, as soon as is convenient. I do not have to tell you that you must be careful today with publicly disciplining your child; this is something that must be carefully done. It must however be done. You must always show your child that you are in control, not the child.

Proverbs 29:15 **“The rod and rebuke give wisdom, but a child left to himself brings shame to his mother.”** No child can simply be left to itself without being given correction, if so they will only bring shame. The rod must be applied along with rebuke otherwise there will never be peace.

In our world we are taught that spanking a child will bring psychological damage, that we may hurt the child emotionally and mentally for life but turn with me to Proverbs 23:13 **“Do not withhold correction from a child, for if you beat him with a rod, he will not die.”** When we properly, led by God correct our children with the rod they will not die, we will not harm them, in fact as the next verse reads we will deliver his soul from hell. See why the use of the “rod” is so vital; by it we are able to save our children from hell.

Discipline, correction, rebuking, keeping in check and punishing are so important for we read in Proverbs 5:23 **“He shall die for lack of instruction, and in the greatness of his folly he shall go astray.”** Discipline will keep us from foolishness as well as from going astray. How many children do you think might be going astray and on their way to hell as a result of no discipline?

The world is much more under the control of the enemy today than it was when we were children, and as a result the need of firm, strong discipline is greater than ever before, other wise we are going to lose our children. Therefore, we must be strong as parents and we must sometimes do what we do not want to do, but what we know will be the spiritual best for our children.

Proverbs 19:18 **“Chasten your son while there is hope, and do not set your heart on his destruction – or worry about his crying.”** Too many will not

apply the “rod” because he may make the precious little thing cry, but we are to ignore the crying knowing that this will bear fruit.

Perhaps more than any other age raising children today is the worse ever, there is such a lack of discipline in our school system, there is such a pull of the world, such a freedom in society, there is such an acceptance of sin and wrongness that even our Christian young people have been pulled into its grip. Girls dress improperly and boys feel that a date should soon lead to a sexual experience and therefore we have our work cut out for us. It is a work that never stops and it goes on and on weakening and tiring us, causing us to want to give up but we must not give up for the enemy wants our children and we must stand between Him and his pull upon them

Proverbs 29:17 **“Correct your son, and he will give you rest; yes, he will give delight to your soul.”**

We live in such a busy and fast paced world that most of us are usually worn out and only want some rest, as a result we may simply not want to discipline our children because we are tired. As the verse reads however, if we really want rest, if we expect to one day have rest we need to correct our children. Eventually through the faithfulness of discipline we will have rest in our homes as well as in our hearts, in fact through the faithfulness of our discipline our children will one day be the delight of our lives. Do we ultimately want rest, do we one day want our children to be the delight of our lives? Than we must not give up we must ever seek God for wisdom, strength and faithfulness in being able to continue disciplining our children on into maturity. May God be with us all and assist us in the awesome work that He has given to us as parents.



## **“Darkness requires Light”**

J. W. Sims

We live in a day when there is such darkness, darkness that has been able to clothe itself in light, and that is why it is so dangerous, and why so many do not see its darkness. We live at a time when we need and when we will continue to need discernment and light, like never before. In these latter days we must be on our guard as things are changing and preparations are being made for a worldwide deception that will lead to a false religion and a religion that makes you think you are okay when you are not.

As I begin this lesson I want you to understand that it is possible for us to be deceived, sure perhaps not permanently, not in such a way that we can lose what we have in Christ, but deceived to the point of not being where we should be, and even assisting the enemy in these latter days to bring forth and make way for the antichrist. We must understand that Satan does not simply want to be in the world, he wants to be in the church and it is our job to have nothing to do with his coming into the church. Remember, he is not simply going to be a leader of economy, and politics, but also of religion and even now is the way being prepared.

**I Timothy 4:1 “Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed, to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils.”**

We cannot ignore this verse in these last days that we live in, we need to memorize and keep it upon our hearts. The Spirit of God has made it clear that in these latter days we will have people who depart from the faith, it is just a fact, they will depart meaning they will apostatize themselves which means they will reject Christianity after having said they accepted it. Now if this is true, we can only assume that though these folks professed, they never really knew the Lord. They are those who I John spoke of in 2:19 **“They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us, but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.”**

I think as time passes we are going to be shocked as to what we see in this area, children who we know and love; children who we believed were properly centered are going to reject spiritual things and depart from us. 2 Thessalonians 2:3 **“ Let no man deceive you by any means; for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition.”**

A great falling away is already here, and it is not a falling away from religious things but a falling away from spiritual things and as it says here this must happen before we see the entrance of the antichrist. This is most serious, for when the falling away comes when it helps set up things for the antichrist, and it is the falling away that we are seeing if we have eyes to see.

These are the kind of people spoken of in 2 Timothy 3 where we read in verse 5 and verse 7: **“Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof”** and also **“Ever learning but never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.”**

These kinds of folks are all around us and as time passes their presence will be more evident. Religious yes, people who know the Lord, no. I believe as time passes the true children who are totally and completely Christ centered, and those who are not will become increasingly clear. I also believe in the coming years that we will see our Father gather the true children round about Him, as I believe He doing even now.

Please note that in 1 Timothy 4:1 we were told they departed the faith giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils. These folks left Christ because they were seduced into it by evil spirits and by false doctrine. We must study the Word, we must be alert we must carefully evaluate everything that is being preached, taught and written we must realize that even doctrine can lead us astray especially when the enemy is teaching it.

1 John 4:1 **“Beloved believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God; because many false prophets are gone out into the world.”**

In these last days you and I cannot accept everything being presented to us as being from God, as time passes there will be many false prophets and teachers in the world used by the enemy to take you and I off center.

It is the purpose of this message to assist each one of us to realize that according to the Word of God we must be on our guard, we must be alert, because one of the big problems is going to be spiritual deception, a work to take us from Christ to the antichrist. Why is this? We must remember that Satan has always only wanted to be worshipped, and it is his purpose in these latter days to find worship from a deceived people who have accepted him as if he is the real Christ.

As you know one of the most important latter day messages was given to us by Christ in Matthew chapter 24. Within this wonderful chapter several times Christ points out to us that we must be on our guard for the problem of deception. In a passage of scripture that is pointing out on the things that are coming in the last days repeatedly Christ points out that deception will be a problem. Therefore, we should not be surprised when people are being deceived, and we should also even realize the necessity of so being on our guard and praying for pastors that they will give us light and truth and keep us straight. Matthew 24: 4 **“And Jesus answered and said unto them, take heed that no man deceive you.”** When the disciples asked Him about the signs of the last days it is vital for us to see that He begins with deception, for deception is the very first thing to be on our guard for.

Matthew 24:11 **“And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many.”**

Matthew 24:24 **“For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets and shall show great signs and wonders, insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.”**

Three times in Matthew 24 our Savior points out the problem of deception, even showing that those who may come to deceive will come showing signs and wonders and even if possible deceive the very elect. Therefore, we conclude a big problem in these days in which we live is deception, many will be deceived and the deception is so bad and so intense, so world wide that if it were possible even the elect could be deceived. Now no matter, what we think we know or think we have perceived about the coming of Christ, we now know it will be saturated with deception. Therefore, stay close to a Godly appointed shepherd, stay close to the Holy Spirit, stay saturated and knowledgeable concerning the Word of God. Never accept religious things coming to you as if they are automatically from God, ask Him to give you light concerning everything.

During the latter days of time, when this world is in turmoil concerning the Great Tribulation one of the big difficulties it will be dealing with is the enemy and his deception, a deception that has already begun but a deception that is direct from Satan and therefore a deception that we must ever watch for and be alert concerning.

Revelation 12:9 **“And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world; he was cast out unto the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.”**

As we see here, though there will be a time when he is struck down from the air, he was a being who had been deceiving the whole world. I expect we do not like to think of being deceived but when we do not walk in the light of Christ, and His Word, when we deny the work of the Holy Spirit, we can be deceived into accepting an antichrist as if he is the Christ.

Revelation 13:14 **“And deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast; saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image of the beast, which had the wound by a sword, and did live.”**

The one who deceives here is a false holy spirit who works to cause people to accept and worship the antichrist during the tribulation period. No matter what we think about the days of tribulation we cannot ignore that the tool of the enemy is deception.

When the eighteenth chapter of Revelation is teaching us the truths concerning the Babylonian Harlot and the damage she has brought to the earth and how God will deal with her, we read in verse 23 **“And the light of a candle shall shine no more at all in thee; and the voice of the bridegroom and of**

**the bride shall be heard no more at all in thee; for thy merchants were the great men of the earth; for by that sorceries were all nations deceived.”**

We cannot take time to teach the Babylonian Harlot here as recently we taught it in our McFarland Fellowship, but we need to remember that the spirit of Babylon has always been and here we see that she has deceived the nations. Therefore, contrary to our thoughts and understanding, deception has always been our problem, in our hearts, in our minds and in our world, from the time of the garden when Eve was deceived, deception has reigned and therefore it is deception we must be on our guard for.

Finally in Revelation 20 when God places the devil in a bottomless pit for one thousand years we read: **“And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled and after that he must be loosed for a little while.”**

Yes, as we have repeatedly seen, Satan’s main work is a work of deception always has been and always will be, and the only way that God can keep this deception from going out into the world is to place him in a bottomless pit and seal it up so there will be peace, light, and understanding during the one thousand years of peace. This is why the thousand years of the reigning of Christ will be so glorious and wonderful, but look at how things change when the devil is released in verse 7 and 8: **“And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, and shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth.”**

Therein, is the problem of deception made clear for it is the purpose of the enemy to deceive the world, to blind our eyes, to cause us to think that we should reject God and Christ and worship him. Even after one thousand years in a bottomless pit he immediately begins his work of deception. These things are ever more prevalent in our day than they have ever been before, therefore we shall daily pray for light, and understanding less we accept religion for our salvation rather than our Christ. Children of God walk in the light our Father has given, test the spirits be saturated with the Word, dependent upon the Holy Spirit and ever watching.

## **“Free and Delivered”**

J.W. Sims

One of the needed and blessed truths that we need to understand, accept and rest in is the blessed fact that we through Christ have not only been forgiven, but also delivered from the demands of the law. The law demands perfection, and if you offend in one area you are guilty of all.

Christ has come not only to bring us forgiveness for sin, but also to deliver us from meeting the standards of the law by our own ability, something that is unattainable. The book of Romans as well as the book Galatians takes up this important issue.

Today as we begin this presentation we need to realize that this problem of bringing people back into the law of do's and don'ts is still very much with us. There are still many who will act as if Christ is not all you need, because after all after you receive Christ you also need to live the life by your own personal effort, you still have to submit yourself to being obedient to the demands of the law or to any rules and regulations that your church sets up. This type of procedure is not Biblical for it detracts from the full value of Christ, the fact that He not only forgives us but that He has become the fulfillment of the law.

In Galatians chapter 1:6 Paul cannot believe, he marvels that anyone who had come into the grace of Christ would ever turn away from that grace. Why would anyone who had newly discovered that Christ was all they needed for salvation and for the living of the Christian life ever return back into the law of doing it by you're their own strength? Paul cannot believe it, and yet so many do the same today; certainly it is a work of the enemy to bring the Lord's children back into bondage.

To follow this kind of procedure is to be going into another gospel, which as Paul says, really is not another gospel but actually a perverted gospel and anyone who would take the Lord's children into a perverted gospel should be cursed, verses 7-9.

Paul makes clear where he received his message of the true gospel in verse 12: **“For I neither received it from men nor was I taught it, but it came through the revelation of Jesus Christ.”**

The true gospel is a message that is from Christ Himself, and Paul received this light directly from Him and it is this revelation that we each must rest in when it comes to the blessed gospel. Christ alone has become our Savior and He not only brings us forgiveness but He also brings to us deliverance and victory. Anyone who brings us another message is bringing to us a perverted gospel and God will deal him or her.

Paul has been presenting Christ as the answer to everything, He alone is our salvation and He alone is our deliverance, the only one who is able to meet and fulfill the demands of the law.

In Galatians however, there are a group of people, no doubt Jews, who come into the local body to spy out the freedom that these children have found in Christ. You see the enemy does not appreciate it when we see Christ as the answer to our needs and will do anything he can to detract us from Him. Therefore, he will work to use individuals to pull us away from Christ and to once again bring us back into the bondage of the law. Let us look at these individuals together beginning with chapter 2:4:

**“And this occurred because of false brethren secretly brought in who came in by stealth to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage.”**

Please note that the purpose of these individuals was to sneak in to this body simply to spy, to search out the freedom that these believers had in Christ. What was done in Paul’s day most certainly is still being done in our day, for the enemy still hates it when the Lord’s children trust the Lord not only for salvation but also for victory in their lives. Notice the things we learn concerning these individuals: They are false brethren, not true brothers, they come in secretly, sneaking in, they are spies, and some translations refer to them as infiltrators. I do believe that even today the enemy is still sending infiltrators into local bodies to bring us back into the bondage of the law.

In 1:7 we learn that they are troublers, perverters and accursed individuals, so God’s opinion of such folks is not very high. Again in 5:10 Paul refers to them as troublers. Imagine having these kinds of people sneaking into your church: troubling, perverting, and working to cause people to lose sight of Christ. In 5:7 we read: **“You ran well, who hindered you from obeying the truth?”** Now we see that they are also hinderers, in that they keep us from moving on into the freedom and growth of Christ. Notice also that they are individuals who keep us from truth, and therefore bring us into falseness. How careful we must be to rest in the security of Christ. How we must be on guard not to allow anyone to detract us from Christ. You see, what these individuals were doing was saying that sure Christ is okay, you can have Christ you need Christ, but, you also need the law. Any time anyone tells you that sure you need Christ, but you also need such and such you know that it is the old problem of Galatianism.

Notice the strong feelings Paul had concerning these individuals in 2:5 **“to whom we did not yield submission even for an hour, that the truth of the gospel might continue with you.”** Every church wants to grow today; therefore we are sometimes too quick to bring into the church individuals who should not be brought in. These folks Paul would not give place even for one hour. He immediately dealt with them and would not tolerate them being in that ministry bringing that perversion of the gospel. Today we must have this same attitude lest our ministry become corrupted from Christ. It may seem harsh when you

must force someone out of a church but we must not tolerate those who have a message of Christ plus something else.

Paul gives to us the clear message of the gospel in this book of Galatians for in 2:16 we read: **“Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified.”** There it is as clear and as simple as Paul can make it, it is by faith in Christ Jesus. If you try to be justified by the works of the law you are in trouble because no one can ever be justified by the law for we cannot meet its standards.

We, as we see here can only be justified through Christ by our faith in Him. How many there are however that just cannot seem to accept this sweet and wonderful plan of God. The clearness of this view is also seen in Galatians 2:21 **“I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died in vain.”** If we all could be justified by keeping the law there certainly would have been no reason for the Savior to die. This message is so important that Paul did not just give its truth in Galatians but also in Romans for there in Romans 3:20 we read: **“Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin.”**

Paul continues his letter in Galatians 3:1 with some very strong language: **“O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among you as crucified?”**

He refers to them as being foolish, as having been bewitched, having had a spell put upon them, as a person who has been deceived into accepting this false view and turning from the truth. If any of us turn back to the law after coming to Christ, this is what we are: Foolish and bewitched.

In verses 3-6 it is made clear that it is all by faith and never by our works that we can be justified. Let us learn to rest in verse 13 **“Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us.”**

Surely Christ has delivered us from the law, and it therefore no longer has a hold on our lives, but what of the law, has it no purpose? Most certainly the law has a purpose and that purpose is pointed out in 3:24-25 **“Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith but after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.”** You see the purpose of the law was to show us our sin as well as our inability to meet its standards and therefore bring us to Christ. Once it has brought us to Christ we no longer need the law.

In 4:9 Paul gives to us a picture of the law: **“How is it that you turn again to the weak and beggarly elements, to which you desire again to be in bondage? The law is always that which is weak and beggarly meaning poor. No, the law can never be as rich and powerful as the work of the Holy Spirit within our lives. In verse 11 he continues: “I am afraid for you, lest I have labored for you in vain.”** To bring someone into the richness and freedom of

Christ only to have him or her return to the law would be a great loss to any shepherd. Paul's real purpose for the lives of those whom he ministers too is seen in verse 19 **"My little children, for whom I labor in birth again until Christ is formed in you."** Paul is certainly not concerned about anyone trying to live according to a set of rules, but that Christ Himself would be formed in them that they might be enriched by all that Christ is. This only is the Christian life.

In 5:1 we read: **Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke on bondage."** Once we come into the liberty of Christ we are to remain there and never allow ourselves or anyone else to take us back into the law. As he states in verse 2: "If we go back into the law, Christ will profit us nothing, we will be a debtor to keep the whole law." If we have gone back to the law as verse 4 reads we will be estranged from Christ, we will have fallen from Christ. What Christian in this world would want to fall from God's grace?

As Paul continues he cannot understand how this happened, he expresses: **"you ran well, who hindered you from obeying the truth?"** How many there are who would hinder, beat us back from enjoying all the wonderful freedom and grace of God.

Since we would all agree that the law is important and its fulfillment vital we are left with a question: "How can its demands be answered?" Certainly the fulfillment of the law is all taken care of by Christ Himself, since He is the fulfillment of the law, there are however some indications as to how it is fulfilled in you and I. Chapter 5:14 **"For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: you shall love your neighbor as yourself."** In I John we learn that the way in which we know we are Christians, is by the fact that we love the brethren. The confirmation of being a Christian as well as the fulfillment of the law is by the fact of love. We continue on to learn in verse 16 as well as verse 18: **"I say then; walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh." "But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law."**

In conclusion in order to understand how this works we need to realize that since the Christian is no longer under the law it does not mean that he can live any way he chooses to live. A Christian is actually under a higher and more intricate law for he is under the law of the Spirit. The Christian no longer by fleshy effort tries to meet the demands of the law and live for God, but now by the Holy Spirit within him, he listens to the direction of the Spirit and by the Spirit also lives the Christian life. Therefore, though we come out of the stress and strain of fleshy effort to live for God we then come into the resting in the Spirit that brings us into the rest of Christ and the victory of the Spirit. How much more blessed is this? How much more victory and peace does this bring? See why we must never allow anyone to bring us back into the bondage of self-effort but that we would ever remain in the richness and victory of the Spirit. This alone brings the



joy of Christian experience. Our answer now to those who say we have too much freedom to live like we want to live is no, my friend for though we have been delivered from the rules of the law we have now come under the leading of the Holy Spirit.

## **“Creation and restoration of God’s World”**

J.W. Sims

This lesson and the two to follow are a part of what I am calling a Golden Nugget series, that is a series that will search for rich glimpses of the cross and Christ even in the Old Testament. The purpose of these lessons will be to exalt God, His riches, and His plan of salvation as well as His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

As we begin this series I will begin it with the very first chapter of the Bible, a foundational passage that seems to affect the faith of so many people, a passage of scripture that is so under attack by the enemy that when he wins here he seems to win for the life of the individual. This no doubt is why the creation message of God’s Word is so under attack in our schools and why evolution is so promoted, for the enemy believes if he can corrupt the minds of our young people here he can gain them for their whole life, and they will never have a belief and faith in God.

It is therefore very important that you and I understand this chapter and the message that it truly presents. Without realizing it I believe the way in which we have presented this passage concerning creation has actually given an opportunity for the enemy to use it against us. Therefore, Christians need to study; they need to be led by good men who understand the richness, and true message of the Word. When it comes to Genesis chapter one we must slow down, be willing to look at the original language, and have our eyes opened by the Holy Spirit. The position I will present to you in this lesson is not my own position but is shared with many deep and rich Bible teachers who I believe have been led by the Lord, men such as G.H. Pember, Arthur W. Pink, Dr. Barnhouse, Watchman Nee and even Dr. Gaebelein. Therefore, my presentation comes with the company and support of many solid Bible teachers.

**“In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.”** Is the place we accept as being the starting work of God concerning the creation of the world, for most Christians accept this as a panoramic view before God begins to show us how He accomplished this creation. The problem is, that it is very possible that this is not the way to accept this opening verse. Verse one may very well be just exactly what God wants it to be, a presentation of His completed work. God created the atmospheric heaven and the earth, and it was done and complete. It was everything God wanted it to be, blessed be the name of the creative God. The word “created” here is the Hebrew word “bara” meaning “to bring something from nothing.” It was a work that only God could do, for no man would ever bring forth something out of nothing. This clearly reveals that in verse one God had brought the heavens and the earth into existence by His creative power and it was done, complete and finished.

**“And the earth was without form, and void, and darkness was upon the face of the waters.”** We generally continue on showing how God is working with and developing the earth into what He desires, without carefully studying how this passage might have been originally presented in the original Hebrew language. Using noted men who are steeped in God’s Word and its original language you need to look closely at this passage. The word “and” could just as well have been presented as “: but” and the word “was” could have been presented as “became.” Therefore we have a passage that could have and perhaps should have been rendered this way: **“But the earth became without form, and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep.”**

Please note Genesis 19:26 speaking of Lot’s wife where we read: **“His wife looked back from behind him, and she became a pillar of salt.”** The same Hebrew word that was interpreted “was” in Genesis 1:1 is used here but interpreted “became” not “was.” Also in Genesis 2:7 the same Hebrew word was used to say **“and man became a living soul”** rather than man was a living soul. Therefore, it becomes perfectly clear that the word **“the earth became”** could be a very valid presentation of the verse. Many Bible scholars accept this as the only valid presentation.

Now turn with me to Isaiah 45:18 **“Thus saith Jehovah that created the heavens, the God that formed the earth and made it, that established it and created it not a waste, that formed it to be in habited: I am the Jehovah; and there is none else.”**

Now in another passage of scripture we have before us as clear as God can make it that when He created (brought something out of nothing) the earth He did not create it to be a waste. The word waste is the Hebrew word “tohu” and means waste, desolation, worthless, confusion and wilderness. Therefore, initially in verse one God had created the earth to be everything He desired it to be, He never created it a waste not even temporality.

We must therefore ask, what happened to make God’s perfect and complete creation devastation in verse two? Though I will not in this lesson present detailed passages of scripture, most Bible scholars believe that what caused the devastation was the rebellion of Lucifer and his angels. That when this happened God not only threw him out of his exalted position but also damaged the perfect creation of verse one. This devastation no doubt is still seen in the earth by those who study geological things concerning our earth.

Turn with me also to Jeremiah 4:23-26 **“I beheld the earth, and lo, it was without form, and void; and the heavens, and they had no light. I beheld the mountains, and lo, they trembled, and all the hills moved lightly. I beheld, and lo, there was no man, and all the birds of the heavens were fled and lo, the fruitful place was a wilderness, and all the cities thereof were broken down at the presence of the Lord, and by his fierce anger.”**

Is this not a spiritual insight that God gave to Jeremiah that somehow God gave Jeremiah the ability to see back into time? That God opened the eyes of Jeremiah so that he could see what happened to cause the damage of Genesis

2:2? Something truly had happened that changed things from what they were. We notice that there were inhabitants there, since now there were no men, who these inhabitants were bring much speculation but if this is something new to you, you need to realize that the solid Bible scholars of past years not only believe there was a pre-adamic race but taught it. I have little study in this area, and there are only small glimpses of such things in the word and from the scholars, but if there was a pre-adamic race a man like creature who was not in the image of God as Adam might this not answer a lot of questions concerning the bodies that are found? It is not my purpose to teach, support or explain the theories of man, for I only stand upon the foundation of God's Word, but if in understanding something of His Word that may be an answer to man's presentation than that is fine with me.

Isaiah 24:1 **“Behold, the Lord maketh the earth empty, and maketh it waste, and turneth it upside down, and scattereth abroad the inhabitants.”** Here we see that the Lord Himself is given credit for the earth becoming empty and waste, terms that imply desolation, wilderness and confusion. So obviously there are passages of scripture that show us that there is a difference between verse one and verse two of Genesis and that God somehow had a hand in it. This must have happened before man came upon the scene for we no of nothing like this since we have been upon the earth.

As we close this part of our lesson we might ask: Fine, but what does all of this mean to me? How does it change anything? Modern day geologists tell us that the Bible account cannot be possible for geologically it can be seen that this earth is perhaps millions of years old. Now, though we are not trying to prove them right, we can agree, and why is that? Because this earth could be millions of years old, we do not know how long ago it was originally created, we do not know how long a time there may have been between being created and becoming “without form and void,” We do not know how long God may have allowed it to remain in a devastated state before He began to move? What we do know it that according to the Bible man has been here for approximately six-thousand years, but that does not mean the earth has only been here six-thousand years. We just do not know all the things we might like to know because our Father has not told us, He did not see a need in us knowing much about a first creation, a devastation and a repair of what had been damaged. He is God and He has given to us as much info as He felt we needed and so by faith we trust Him, and rest in Him concerning the things we know and the things we do not know.

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