

# Pastor's Conference

For release after 6:15 PM, Sunday, June 11, 1989

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## "Pictures of the Pastor"

by Johnny Jackson

Text - Psalm 37:3

### Introduction

One of the reasons I love the Psalms so much is for the graphic and vivid pictures they give to us concerning the godly life. Our text verse certainly sets forth the ideal character and conduct of the obedient pastor. I trust that God will challenge us all to make our lives like the four pictures we see here.

#### I. Picture One - The Picture of Faith - "Trust in the Lord"

Where are you at the level of faith? The Bible reminds us that the "just are to live by faith". Note the following about faith:

1. It is to be *personal* faith. What is the subject of this clause? It is the pronoun "you" understood. *You* are to have faith. The one who reads this. The one who hears it. All are to have faith. We cannot trust the Lord for somebody else. Each person must have his own faith.
2. It is to be *particular* faith. "Trust in the *Lord*". The object of faith gives value and validity to the faith itself. In the dark days of the Depression, Franklin Roosevelt cheered a despondent nation with his Fireside Chats. One of his famous lines was "have faith in faith". I say to you our faith must be in the Lord.
3. It is to be *present* faith. This personal, particular faith is to be exercised in the present. We are to trust the Lord *now*, not just in tough times of difficulty. The only faith that is real faith is present tense faith.
4. It is to be *permanent* faith. Has your faith reached that stage? We see hundreds of pastors leaving the ministry every year. Have they run out of faith? What set of circumstances would it take for you to "throw in the towel" and quit? If our personal, particular, present faith becomes perennially present it will lock itself into permanent faith. That's the kind every pastor needs.

#### II. Picture Two - The Picture of Obedience - "and do good"

1. The Christian life is a life of doing. We are not to trust in the Lord and do nothing. We are not to trust in the Lord and coast into Heaven. We are to be active. The Bible says "be doers of the Word and not hearers only".

In 1960 I attended the Pastor's Conference in Miami Beach. Dr. W. O. Vaught, the president, had his son, Carl Gray Vaught, to bring one of the messages. Showing great insight for a young man Carl said, "the trouble with most of us is that we want to live in the nouns of the Christian faith and not the verbs".

We are still like that today. Oh, we love the nouns - glory, joy,

peace, mercy, Heaven! But Carl Vaught said what about the verbs - be, do, go, give, witness, win!

2. The Christian life is a life of doing *good*. We don't just do anything. We surely don't do what comes naturally. We do *good*. Peter described Jesus as a man "who went about doing good". Jesus said, "let your light so shine that men may see your good works and glorify your Father in Heaven". We have so resisted the false doctrine of salvation by works that we many times miss the great exhortation in the Bible to live a life of good works. James says good works proves our faith. Paul wrote that we were saved for the purpose of good works.

#### III. Picture Three - The Picture of Lifestyle - "So shall ye dwell in the land"

How are we to dwell? Not in carnality, not in misery, not in defeat, etc. We are to dwell in faith and obedience - trusting the Lord and doing good!

1. This is normal lifestyle. Every Christian is to live this way. We never outgrow faith and obedience. These things are to be two great characteristics in our lives.
2. This is necessary lifestyle. It is necessary to growth, to effectiveness and to pleasing God. We sing about it. "Trust and Obey for *there's no other way* to be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey". Do we understand that? Do we believe that?

We all recognize the necessity of faith. The Bible says "without faith it is impossible to please Him". The Bible says "Whatsoever is not faith is sin". The Bible says "This is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith".

Do we understand the corresponding necessity of obedience? The Bible says "it is better to obey than to sacrifice". Jesus asked once "Why call ye me, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" Let our lifestyle be *both* the picture of faith and obedience.

#### IV. Picture Four - The Picture of Blessing - "verily thou shalt be fed"

This picture is conditional upon the others - i.e., if we trust, if we do good, if these two dominate our lifestyle, then we will be blessed, we will be abundantly fed by the Lord. Note these three things about blessing:

1. It is promised blessing. See the word "verily, verily". We say surely, surely. E. V. Hill says "sho' nuff, sho' nuff"! It is as certain as God's Word.
2. It is personal blessing. If you trust and obey the nation will be blessed, the community will be blessed, the church will be blessed, the family will be blessed, but also *you* will be blessed. As faith is to be personal so the blessings will be. God will show Himself mighty in your behalf.
3. It is plentiful blessing. The picture is one of abundant blessing! The Psalms abound with this kind of picture. In Psalm 103 the writer says "Bless the Lord, O my Soul, and forget not *all* His benefits". In Psalm 68 there is the word that "the Lord daily loadeth us with benefits". Psalm 81:10 says "open thy mouth wide and I will fill it."  
One of my favorite grandfather chores is to take my grandchildren to Baskin-Robbins Ice Cream. I have taken all nine since they sat in my lap to be fed. I may have had a problem with bite number one, but from bite number two to infinity there was no problem. Faster than I could spoon the ice cream that little mouth flew open in great expectation. This is the picture here. It

is not God trying to cram some Spiritual castor oil down us, but it is God filling us up with Baskin-Robbins ice cream.

He will do it for us all. My prayer is for each of you pastors to so trust and do good, to so live in faith and obedience that our gracious Lord will continually fill you to overflowing with His blessings. Amen!

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## **“Last Will and Testament” (2 Timothy 1:6-8, 13-14)**

by John C. Click

If you knew that next Sunday you would be preaching your last sermon and that you could choose the audience to hear it, what would you say and to whom would you say it? Some perhaps would want to preach their last sermon to a congregation of the lost and extend one final invitation to come to Christ. Others might choose to preach to the flock they had served and come to love over the years.

If I knew that this would be my last message preached on this earth I would want to address it to ministers like yourselves and could imagine no better text than the words addressed to a young preacher by the name of Timothy by his friend and mentor the Apostle Paul.

It is generally recognized that 2 Timothy was the last letter Paul wrote. In all probability the Roman state had already passed the death sentence on him. As he waits for the coming of the guards to lead him to execution he considers himself martyred already saying: “For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come.” (2 Tim. 4:6) And then he adds: “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith . . .” (2 Tim. 4:7)

These last words of Paul stand in glorious contrast to the dismal last hours of the man who condemned him and who had the blood of countless Christian martyrs on his hands. Nero learned that the Senate had condemned him to be stripped naked and scourged to death with rods with his head thrust into a fork. He was horrified, took two daggers, held them to his throat and begged someone to show him how to die. At the sound of the approaching centurions his slave drove the daggers home. As he lay dying he said to the centurion “too late, is this your fidelity?” For Nero it was “too late” for men had failed him. Paul however could say “the time of my departure has come” and resting in the faithfulness of Christ affirm that “in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day . . .”

Our text then is a part of the last will and testament of Paul. Imagine that you have been permitted one last visit with the old apostle. Escorted into his cell you seat yourself on a crude wooden bench facing this man so singularly used by God. He seems to be forgetful of himself as his still bright eyes fasten on your own. He sees in you, as he did in Timothy, your discouragement, your sense of inadequacy. He begins to speak. What will he say in these final precious moments? His message today would contain within it the same basic admonitions he wrote to Timothy. As you imagine yourself in the apostle's cell for that final visit let's review together his last will and testament.

### **First, STIR UP YOUR GIFT (vr. 6).**

You need not be bound by timidity or fear. Fear is foreign to faith! If you are experiencing it now in your ministry know that this emotion is not from God. It is a device of Satan to keep you exiled on an island of inaction or in some brackish backwater of mediocrity.

Some here may be suffering the spiritual equivalent of agoraphobia or fear of the outdoors. Locked behind their doors of fear and timidity, and encircled by the wall of the familiar and the predictable, the agoraphobic never ventures into the wider world to experience its agony and ecstasy.

During recent years there has been an emphasis on the importance of every Christian discovering their spiritual gift or gifts. But discovered or not, your gifts will be of little consequence if they are held captive by

your fears.

What can liberate your gifts? Paul tells us in his last words to Timothy. Timothy too was in danger of allowing himself to become captive to his fears. He saw his beloved friend Paul treated as a common criminal. This profoundly gifted man had refused to “hide his light under a bushel” and had boldly gone “outdoors” and used his gifts to help hurting people. A prison cell and a death sentence was all that he had received for his efforts. Timothy imagines himself alone now in a pagan city. One solo voice seeking to be heard over the Ephesian chorus of carnality.

It is to help Timothy quiet his fears, open the door and go into the wider world with the Gospel that Paul reminds him and us of just how truly ‘gifted’ we are.

You have received the gift of an **UNCONQUERABLE POWER!** “God has not given us the spirit of fear, but of power . . .” (Vr. 7) Paul's prayer was to know by experience “the power of His resurrection.” This should be our heart's cry and praise God it can be our experience! One reason we know so little of “the power of the resurrection” is because we attempt so little requiring it!

You my Christian friend have received the gift of an **UNQUENCHABLE LOVE!** “Not the spirit of fear . . . but love . . .” One of the reasons I still have hope for our convention is because my Bible tells me that within the heart of every true believer lies the untapped capacity to love in the same way Christ loves us. In the power of the spirit we can love others with a love that will not stop loving and refuses to be quenched. It was through faith we were saved and it can be through that same quality of faith that God's unquenchable love can be released, directed and applied to our wounded denomination, its witness and all its people. Be a channel not only for power, but for love . . . your church, our denomination and our world needs it desperately!

You have received thirdly the gift of an **UNASSAILABLE JUDGEMENT!** “not fear . . . sound mind (disciplined thinking)” Christian, you have the spiritual ability to keep a “cool head” in a “hot” situation. Never has there been a day which called for warmer hearts and cooler heads.

We're like men adrift on a stormy sea arguing over who will man the pumps! Our institutions, our values as a society are “awash”. Many in panic are running with the wind, in peril of being swamped by the next mountainous swell that sweeps astern. But as Christians we can have the mind of Christ and with it the good judgement to lower the sail, turn the bow into the wind, hold her steady, and wait for the storm to pass. Yes, if I had one last sermon to preach I would want to preach to preachers and challenge them to stir up their gifts of unconquerable power, unquenchable love and unassailable judgement.

Stir up your gifts but also my brothers and sisters, be ready to **SUFFER FOR THE GOSPEL.** “Join with me in suffering for the gospel” (vr. 8) Paul enjoins. Notice pastor, that suffering was never intended to be a solo experience. Too many are anxious to be faithful to the last drop of someone else's blood! But know this suffering saint; you're never in better company than when you are suffering for the Gospel.

When we suffer we keep close fellowship with John in his lonely exile, and Stephen under a shower of stones. We keep company with men like John Huss, who, when the fagots had been piled up to his neck and about to be lit was asked if he would recant. “No” he cried, “I take God to witness, I preached none but His own pure doctrines, and what I taught I am ready to seal with my blood.” We keep company with latter day sufferers for the Gospel like Lottie Moon, starving so children could be fed and Bill Wallace, ministering to sick bodies until hate filled men could tolerate his love no longer.

There is something in the very heart of a man that responds to the challenge to “come and suffer.” At the turn of the century an English explorer sought to enlist men to make a journey across the polar cap to the North Pole. He placed an advertisement in the *London Times*: Wanted! Men for dangerous assignment. Long days of labour, cold nights of danger. Low pay. Strong likelihood that some will not return alive. Send inquiries to . . .” it was signed simply, “Scott.” Within days, hundreds of men had responded to the invitation to suffer and perhaps die.

But a question: Is the Gospel worth suffering for? “Yes! A thousand times over!” Paul would shout across the gulf between heaven and earth.

*The Gospel is worth suffering for, because of where we are.* “Join me in suffering” Paul says. When we suffer we are with him, but infinitely, gloriously more, we are with Christ. We are never closer to Christ than when we suffer. For this reason Paul's greatest desire was to “know Him . . . and the fellowship of his suffering.”

*The Gospel is worth suffering for, because of what we have.* “Join with me in suffering . . . according to the power of God.” (vr. 8) God has made provision for everything in the Christian life . . . even our pain. The fact that provision has been made for suffering testifies to its inevitability. Rather than being surprised when suffering overtakes us it should

serve to remind us of the power of God available to us.

*The Gospel is worth suffering for because of who we are.* We are the "saved" (vr. 9a). We live in an impersonal world. Even here in this great gathering of Christian brothers and sisters few will know our names. But my friend, you are more than a name, an address, a social security number or a statistical average in some annual report. You are "saved!" You are saved for living, saved for dying and will one day be saved in heaven. But for now you are saved to serve and to suffer!

Three men came to Christ and said they wanted to be His disciples. When confronted with the demands of discipleship they all turned away. In the demands He laid on these would be disciples, we have the primary causes of our suffering. To one He said "he that hates not mother, father, brother, sister cannot be my disciple." He turned away. He could not accept the suffering caused by broken relationships.

To a second he said: "take up your cross . . ." He too turned away because of the suffering produced by burdensome responsibilities.

The challenge to the third was to "forsake all that he hath" and he too turned away because of the suffering that comes when one must bury his dreams.

We are the saved and as such will suffer the pain of broken relationships, burdens almost too heavy to bear and dreams that must be buried for the sake of the Gospel.

*The Gospel is worth suffering for because of whose we are.* "God . . . has called us . . ." (vr. 6, 7). Our Lord reminds us that "You have not chosen me, but I have chosen you . . ." Oh, the unimaginable grace of God that he would call us out to serve Him and to share His blessed Gospel.

Paul describes this calling as a "holy calling," a gracious calling "not according to our works" (vr. 9b). God's call is a specific calling . . . "according to his own purpose" (vr. 9c). It is a predestined calling . . . "from all eternity" (vr. 9d) and praise His wonderful name His is a secure calling . . . "he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him until that day" (vr. 12b).

Pastors, we of all people should realize that next to our calling to salvation our call to service is the greatest demonstration of God's grace that can be experienced.

I can almost see the aged preacher rise on tired old legs and walk over to where you are seated in that cell, lay his hand upon your shoulder and grip it and say, "My son, one last word" and pausing and then intently measuring each word say: "*STAND YOUR GROUND!*" Don't give up, give over, or give in!

Stand your ground **DOCTRINALLY** . . . "retain the standard of sound words" (vr. 13a). Never let go of these great doctrinal truths which when embraced in faith are health to your heart and to your hearers.

Stand your ground **LOVINGLY** . . . "retain the standard of sound words . . . in the faith and love which are in Christ Jesus" (vr. 13b) Paul's plea is in the active voice, not in the passive. He is urging us to avoid sterile orthodoxy and verbal shibboleths. Stand by the truth once delivered, yes! But he pleads for the baptism of that doctrinal purity in the bath of "faith and love which are in Christ Jesus."

Stand your ground **DEPENDENTLY** . . . "guard, through the Holy Spirit . . . the treasure . . . entrusted." You don't have to be the self appointed defender of the faith. You have a helper; the only permanent preserver of doctrinal orthodoxy . . . the Holy Spirit.

"Say not, the struggle nought availeth;  
The labours and the wounds are vain,  
The enemy faints not nor faileth,  
And as things have been they remain.  
For while the tired waves, vainly breaking  
Seem here no painful inch to gain,  
Far back in creeks and inlets making  
Comes silent, flooding the main"

Stir up your gift, suffer for the Gospel, stand your ground. You are not alone. Your life may seem for now to have little impact, but remember God's flood tide is rising, silent, irresistibly and one day it will lift you and all who serve Him on its bosom and take you to that place where your service will be rewarded.

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*trustee of the Foreign Mission Board and the Home Mission Board. He and his wife, the former Betty Adams, have four children.*

## "The Pastor and His Ministry"

by Neal T. Jones

Acts 2:42-47

### I. YOU ARE THE PASTOR OF OLD CHURCH SOUTH

Pretend you are the pastor of Old Church South nestled neatly in a Southern sub-culture from which most of us came. This description of your life begins in June of 1986. You are fortunate to be a pastor of a church of seven hundred members, four hundred of whom can be found. There are half a dozen similar churches within ten miles and scores within one hundred thirty miles. Most of your members are homogeneous middle class.

Unlike your former church a hundred and seventy miles to the north you have staff ministers. You minister with a minister of education, a part-time minister of music, a full-time secretary plus extra clerical help in peak seasons. The buildings you occupy range from good to fair with the sanctuary the newest of three buildings.

Your gifts amount to a respectable \$432,000 a year. Thirty-two thousand dollars comes off the top for Cooperative Program missions with an additional \$15,000 for association missions and special offerings.

Like 96 percent of the churches in your area worship services are scheduled at 11:00 on Sunday mornings with auxiliary meetings on Sunday and Wednesday evenings. Attendance at worship and Sunday School services duplicate each other at about 220 per week. Sunday evening worship fluctuates. It is greatly affected by NFL football, TV specials, and seasonal community affairs. You can count on 50 to 100 usually. Wednesday night services are steadier averaging 75 throughout the year. Your statistics are respectable and better than average.

Time is divided between sermon preparation, visitation, hospital calls, counseling, administration, associational involvement, retreats, and family. At times you wish you had a church of a hundred members with the same pay check. At other times you would like a staff of specialists to deal with larger numbers of people in better ways.

You've been at Old South for three years in a ministry that spans eighteen years. This is close to your average stay, omitting the year of seminary pastorates. Sometimes you peer through the window of your study and wonder just how good you are doing in the eyes of the Lord. You wonder if the next eighteen years you will repeat this routine in a series of other churches. Reading the Ecclesiastes description of time composed of recurring events is a sobering experience for you. However, at other times you are extremely proud to assist a few people out of the darkness into light. When someone asks how your church is doing you are tempted to ask, "Compared to what?"

### II. YOU ARE A TROUBLED PASTOR OF OLD CHURCH SOUTH

But you are a troubled pastor of Old Church South. One day driving back from an associational committee meeting punctuated by two stops at the local hospital you recognize recurring signs of restlessness. They have haunted you before. They were part of the agitation that prompted consideration of Old South. This seems to be a carbon copy—a recurring phenomenon. Moving toward home you remember that your wife and children are on a trip to visit her mother and dad and you decide you will go on down to the country and spend Thursday, Friday, and Saturday at your neighbor's lake house with nothing more than a Bible, a hammock, a notebook, and a willing spirit. You need time to think.

Thursday morning you begin by claiming all the commitment you exercised as a junior in college when you surrendered to preach. You begin reading—the book of Acts, the great book on ministry punctuated by variety ministers. You read chapters 1 through 13 slowly looking for minister and ministry characteristics. By noon you have read the chapters several times. You were reminded of unity, courage, worship, preaching, evangelism, power, joy, resurrection, evangelism. Old South bears some similarity to Acts but is far short of a duplicate.

After lunch you snooze with no one to bother you and soon awaken with new vigor. This time you scan Acts 14 to the end of the book. You scan for ways the new churches of the three missionary journeys resemble the churches at Jerusalem and Antioch. Late Thursday you walk around the farm, praying as you go—prayers of praise and intercession. Already you feel better out here in the country. After supper at the roadside cafe you hurry back to the easy chair with the bright light in the big room your friends call the den.

Later on Friday night you take an 8½ by 11 piece of paper and move

to the breakfast room table. With the paper turned sideways you draw a line down the middle. A list is made of the characteristics of Jerusalem and Antioch churches on one side and Old South on the other. Sometimes you write a word, at other times a phrase, and once in a while a sentence. Several pages are filled before you retire. At retirement you feel as though you have lived in two centuries on this Thursday. The churches of your study fade into the distorted church of your dreams.

Friday you rise to jog along the farm to Market Road, eat a makeshift breakfast, and return to the picnic table in the yard, half-shaded from the sun. This is to be a morning of analysis. You boil down the characteristics of the Jerusalem and Antioch churches to several key words. You search for a formula for Old South. Satisfied there is more than one way to do it you finally settle for three words—worship, fellowship, and ministry. Under worship you include the emphasis of apostles teaching and under ministry you feature evangelism. Going back and forth through the familiar terrain of Acts, you detect a warm trail. There is a temptation to stop and write sermons but you resist that temptation. Just a month ago you toyed with the idea of attempting graduate work to escape this rut, but the presence of a wife and children made that difficult. Now you feel a kind of excitement about this kind of study. It is a study without exams and paper work but a study of fascination. The rest of the morning you list, study, arrange all that was done in the church in Jerusalem, Antioch, and Acts. There is satisfaction in your division—Worship, Fellowship, and Ministry.

By one o'clock you are overjoyed and pause to thank God for what this retreat means to you. This is your Bethel. Even more it is your Peniel. You are face to face with God, face to face with church like it ought to be. The pattern makes sense! You write fiercely and think rapidly with the latter out pacing the former. You spill backward into the gospels and forward into the epistles. This pattern comes straight from what Jesus did with the Twelve, you conclude.

On a separate sheet of paper headed "Worship" you list everything having to do with worship. You want to live by this. Your thoughts flow with incomplete sentences. Your notes sound like this. Ten exciting days . . . boom at Pentecost . . . praying, confessing, choosing a successor, always worshipping. Worship was the priority for days before and during Pentecost . . . signs and wonders. Incomplete sentences and comprehensive suggestions abounded. Surely worship was exciting and central before and after Pentecost.

The next sheet was headed by the word "Fellowship." The same pattern of galloping thoughts and incomplete sentences continued. The material had to be digested later. By now you were swept along in front century truth. The discovery of an alternating rhythm between worship and fellowship fascinated. In the homes fellowship was kin to worship in the temple. In both realities the apostles teaching and prayer were prominent. Spontaneity is a word you write with an exclamation. Suppers in homes were like those of Jesus with the twelve. The disciples remembered mealtimes with Jesus. Breaking bread in remembrance of Jesus merged with physical meals. These occasions were simple and happy. Now your anticipations for Old South to become New South began to soar. If someone had a need, another drew on supply. Such sharing was voluntary, spontaneous, and spiritual. The fellowship was stimulating.

Without benefit of a commentary truth settled into categories. In the temple court they worshipped. In the homes they fellowshiped. How many homes would it take to care for three thousand people, you ask. The homes must have been small. Could you figure on three hundred homes with ten each? That equals three thousand. This arrangement would be similar to Jesus with the twelve. That's the key, you say out loud. The Spirit was alive in three hundred groups of ten each where Jesus was alive in the presence of twelve. You can hardly contain yourself. Out of your mental computer came the title of a book you read in seminary by Bonhoeffer, LIFE TOGETHER. That's what they had. You are now as conscious about fellowship as you were about worship. If their worship was exciting, their fellowship was certainly stimulating. While distinct they could not be extricated from each other.

At noon on Friday you decide to postpone lunch. You simply do not want to stop this roll you are on. Your meat is on a bone called the Book of Acts and you will not stop chewing until you get all that meat. Your third word is ministry. Why vary on a good process. You just add more thoughts and more words to this as you did the first two. There aren't as many. It becomes plain that ministry and evangelism seem to be an overflow of worship and fellowship. The power that fluttered over the hundred and twenty in the upper room now spilled across the dam on the three thousand. Wow! What results there were. Changed lives came from changed lives that came from changed lives, ad infinitum. Three hundred groups, three hundred localities, three hundred neighbors nearby, and the Lord threw his Spirit everywhere. The Lord added as the church reflected. Now your thoughts are like rushing torrents tumbling toward a

terminus at the bottom. When a community sees real Christians some want this experience. You remember these were the people who had just crucified Jesus and were now seeking out these Christians. The haters of Christ became the admirers of the church! This evangelism was not a program, a method, a recitation, or a plan. It was an explosion.

By now your fingers are cramped. You are exhausted with writing and push aside your notes. Reaching for the peanut butter jar you balance your spiritual intake with some brown smooth protein spread over Ritz crackers moistened with occasional swallows of skim milk. With your mind and body alternating between too much inspiration to control and too much fatigue to deny you wisely decided on a siesta.

### III. NOW YOU ARE HOPEFUL ABOUT OLD SOUTH AND YOUR PASTORATE

After twenty-five minutes signed off you awake with a jolt and bolt into an experience as exciting as your original call. But the pace changes. Creative speed gives way to contemplative plodding. You are forced to deal with reality in the year 1986 and that wasn't as ideal as your model in the Book of Acts. It is time to honestly compare Old South with the book of Acts. You jot thoughts, words, and descriptive phrases about worship at Old South. Again you utilize your own shorthand with blurbs. Messages are biblical, study of scriptures is reasonably long, you feed the people, you preach the Bible.

Most of what people know about worship is what happens at eleven o'clock on Sunday morning. Then you admit worship is not electrifying. There are exceptions. While you are satisfied with sermon preparation and attendance is as good as other churches something is missing. How can you compare Old South to Pentecost? How could Old South become new South? You will have to study this.

In the new pace of plodding you analyze fellowship. Fellowship happens in a few adult classes and in selected groups, but most of your adult classes are like classrooms. Come to think of it, your choir seems to have more actual fellowship than anyone. There is something about singing the gospel that brings harmonious relationships. Actually you do not have one Sunday School class that compares to Pentecost or the homes in the book of Acts. Mrs. Skagg's class comes as near as any. She teaches people from 70 until graduation. They hang together like a dying breed facing finals. They have to depend on each other.

More and more the differences between the first century and 1986 dawn. You have to factor in the geographical, sociological, and anthropological elements. Your people are scattered. Your people are on wheels flying off in all directions and only lighting for short periods as opposed to walkers of the New Testament. Your people are relatively affluent while theirs were relatively poor. Fear strikes where joy struck earlier. People simply have no time, method, knowledge, or disposition for expertise in Christian fellowship.

Only tragedy and crisis seems to draw the people close together—tragedy in politics, crops, weather, family, or whatever. The fellowship is nothing to compare with that on-going togetherness in Acts. You slowly sink into helplessness. How can Old South stand a New Testament test? You leave the subject without conclusions. You promise to return.

Original enthusiasm has turned to reality. Cinderella has become a pumpkin. Old South compares well with other Southern Baptist churches but not the New Testament. Now what about ministry? Ministry in your church is giving to the mission offerings. Every year you have gone up on Lottie Moon gifts. Each year you have increased the Cooperative Program. Missions in your church is sending a few youth every year to cut firewood in the Appalachian mountains or help with the Vacation Bible School at the next town. It is not that that doesn't qualify for missions. It is such a pitiful speck. It is simply pathetic. When someone needs help, the people of the church always chip in and help. But you don't have a ministry for finding where people hurt. The members of your church are not engaged in regular ministries to anyone in the community. There is no organized attempt to deal with the special interest of the poor, or the rising number of internationals. You don't have much to write. Old South doesn't measure up. You write at the bottom of the page, "We need a new South."

Come late Friday you are not as enthused as before lunch. It's strange how your emotions rise and fall, flow and stagnate in such a short time. The harder you work with the negatives of Old South, the farther away the positives of the New Testament become. After a little supper your mind is tired and you decide to watch the news on TV which doesn't help with its diet of bad news. A situation comedy fails to bring relaxation. It is strange how high you were on the vision of church Friday morning and how low you are on the actualities of your ministry on Friday night. With mixed emotions you refuse discouragement. You drop to your knees, praise God for vision, his word, and your call to preach. You confess the deep need of your church and yourself, and conclude with a

promise you will seek to erase the difference between Old South and Pentecost. Your bedtime mood is hopeful.

#### IV. YOU SENSE THE LORD'S GUIDANCE IN OLD SOUTH

After returning home, greeting your family as they arrive home, and completing the services on Sunday, you begin a re-signing rather than a resignation. You sign a new contract with the Lord based on the church in the book of Acts and Jesus with the twelve. Your mood is somewhere between the ecstasy of Pentecost and the agony of Old South. You determine to point in the direction of the studies you have made. There is no time to begin like Monday morning after an ordinary Sunday.

From that day over three years ago until now some remarkable changes have taken place. Worship services have begun to escape sameness. The only elements nailed down in church worship services are Christ at the center and the Bible along the side. Now you included the minister of music in the planning stages of themes for the year and songs to match themes of worship. Prayers have graduated from clichés of the pulpit to planned discourses with the living God. Themes are announced and people participate with ideas. People are urged to read the Bible through every year. Courses in private devotions are taught. Worship becomes exciting for you. It is more than a weekly sermon. In fact, your sermon is a contribution to the worship of the living God and no longer an end.

Changes in fellowship are harder. Some still expect your deacons meetings to be like a board room at the bank. Others want the Sunday School to be like a lecture hall. This is a point of real burden with you. Everyone doesn't share your vision immediately. You feel the need for family but you find your people more content to be like wanderers at a county fair. Sunday is more like Friday night at Safeway than Pentecost. Christianity is being wholesaled in television and people think they can have access to the Father in heaven while bypassing his family on earth. You find yourself fighting a first class heresy with a small club. Of all things God is kept from his people!

You make small attempts that prove noble. You begin to handle committees, deacons, finance committee, personnel committee, and others like Jesus did the Twelve. You create an atmosphere of high trust. You become an indispensable servant to staff and church. Staff meetings are no longer laborious assignments but times of joy. Prayer becomes an exercise of dependence, praise, and confession rather than a listing of programs awaiting God's stamp of approval. You feel more like Peter at Pentecost than Peter at Calvary. In the pulpit and out you find ways to affirm hurting people who are sincerely trying. In your Sunday night services you are able to feature the family of God, while in the morning you are able to feature the Father God. You find people willing to talk about their pilgrimage on Sunday night—their ups, downs, needs, confessions, and joys. You are not where you want to be yet but you are a long way from where you were. While this was the point of your greatest concern it is the point of greatest gain. Fellowship increases.

Then comes the matter of effective ministry. How do you describe your attempts at ministry. You are a matchmaker, matching gifts of the saints with needs of the community. When you find a need in the community you pray on Sundays to the Lord of the Harvest for laborers. People listen to your prayers and become the answers. They trust you. The rising needs of the poor and the internationals become their concern. A group of ladies form a committee to become involved. Out of this you were able to put your soul-winners in the business of saving the whole person with clothing, food, furniture, and the message of salvation.

What a break when a single parent was helped with furniture and food. Later she enrolled in Sunday School. She and her young son accepted Christ. Now she helps in the same ministry in which she was helped. Why not? Then there was the case of the man who dropped by the church. He had a prison record and was out of luck. You found him at the bottom of the barrel, got him immediate physical help and now he is a member of your church, back on his feet and on the street to help others. The word is out. Old South will help you when you need it. Actually, this is the New South!

#### V. THEN COMES THE GREAT MOMENT OF LIFE FOR YOU IN OLD SOUTH

One morning in November, 1988, you take the church council to a retreat. It's the third one you've had since your retreat in 1986. You pour out your heart to them revealing all the events in the last three years. You confess the great change that has come in your life. They know and gladly listen. You praise and plead with the Lord, and you affirm them. With very few exceptions the council is appreciative, receptive, and in a mood to continue the pursuit of exciting worship, stimulating fellowship, and effective ministry. Surely you have rounded a corner three years later.

The council makes a thorough review. The church is not doing less for foreign missions and home missions than they were but doing more at home along with what they were doing abroad. They are not doing less in evangelism than they were but are doing more. There are more lives genuinely changed. You are not much larger than you were but your church weighs twice as much. The buildings are not cleaner or larger but they are used more. Your chairman of deacons rises to speak to the council. "I've been thinking," he says. "What we have here is a dynamic synergism made up of worship, fellowship, and ministry. Each part, worship, fellowship, and ministry, are better because of their interaction with each other. The whole is stronger and the parts are stronger. That's a dynamic synergism. We are discovering at Old South what they had at Pentecost."

The retreat ends with the church council on their knees focusing outward instead of inward—symbolically. Now they have the desire to lead the church in Life Together and Dynamic Synergism. You are no longer alone like you were three years ago when you came home from your retreat. That night when you went to bed you felt like you were waiting for Pentecost. Now you are a servant, a partner, a part of the family. You said, "Oh God, thank you for inching Old South toward the New South and the New Testament."

#### VI. THEN CAME A STRANGE TWIST AT NEW SOUTH

Sunday following the retreat you notice a pulpit committee you wanted so badly in 1986. They were seeking to be inconspicuous and miserably failing. They were from the church you admired as one of the greatest opportunities in the state. After the service they expressed enthusiastic interest in New South. They were enthused about New South and so are you. You thank them and choose to stay. They were amazed. You were thrilled. This was the New South. That night you prayed, "Thank you, Lord, for a new chapter in my life. Thank you, Lord, that I have found my ministry. Please help my brothers and sisters in all churches discover this Dynamic Synergism in Jesus Christ. Thank you for Life Together. In Jesus' Name. Amen."

For release after 10:35 AM, Monday, June 12, 1989

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### "The Unveiling of Jesus Christ" (Revelation 1:1)

by Darrell L. Gilyard

Often discussed and frequently mentioned, the book of Revelation is probably the least understood of the 66 Books of the Bible. Its message seems to be camouflaged behind a mash of obscurity. It is classified as unfathomable by finite man. Yet this was never God's intention. The book is to be a Revelation, not a Concealment. It is the final volume in the divine library. It supplies the finishing touches to the whole panorama of the biblical story. Without it, our Bible would be quite incomplete, like a stirring story without an ending or a drama without its climax. It is the capstone to all previous Revelation. Many of the truths began back in Genesis are concluded in this matchless book:

Gen.-Commencement-Heaven and Earth

Rev.-Consumation-Heaven and Earth

Gen.-dawn-Satan & Activities

Rev.-doom-Satan & Activities

Gen.-entrance-Sin and Curse

Rev.-exit-Sin and Curse

Gen.-Tree of Life is relinquished

Rev.-Tree of Life is regained

Gen.-Death Enters

Rev.-Death Exits

Gen.-Sorrow Begins

Rev.-Sorrow is Banished

It is God's final word to man. And it is not to be studied simply for the satisfaction of our curiosity, this book is to have a sanctifying effect on our lives. The magnitude of truths in this book is incomparable. We see earthly as well as heavenly activity. We see angels and demons, war in heaven and Armageddon on earth. We see the golden millenium, the

destruction of Satan and a new heaven and earth. And though these themes are prominent in the Book, my proposition to you is this a Revelation of the glory and majesty of Jesus Christ! John was writing to Christians who were shackled by the chains of affliction, and like the blast of a fanfare trumpet he shouts . . . "Look to Jesus."

### I THE SUBJECT OF THE REVELATION (vs. 1a)

Revelation-apohalupsis-apo + kulupto = to expose . . . unveil. This book is the unveiling of Jesus Christ. The curtains are pulled back and we see Him in His glory. Jesus is the subject of this book. Different look at Jesus-Gospels-*Humiliation*. He was born in poverty, reared in obscurity, He knew hunger and thirst, He was buffeted, beaten and braised. He was plunged into abyss of agony, and died an ignominious death. His glory was covered by His humanity-only periodically did His glory shine through (transfiguration, miracles). But if you can stop with the gospels you get only half of the Christ of the New Testament. Rev.-glorification-as He is today.

Gos.-Jesus receives death  
 Rev.-Jesus rebukes death  
 Gos.-His enemies applauded  
 Rev.-His enemies appeal  
 Gos.-He comes to convict  
 Rev.-He comes to condemn  
 Gos.-We see Him in misery  
 Rev.-We see Him in majesty  
 Gos.-He is a Saviour  
 Rev.-He is a sentencer  
 Gos.-He is pierce  
 Rev.-He is praised  
 Gos.-He's the victim  
 Rev.-He gets thrones  
 Gos.-He gets a cross  
 Rev.-He gets a crown  
 Gos.-He's a criminal  
 Rev.-He's a conqueror  
 Gos.-He accepts the guilt  
 Rev.-He accepts the glory

I've come to you today to present to you the risen saviour-Jesus . . . glory and majesty . . . in pomp and power . . . high and holy . . . risen and righteous . . . spectacular splendor. This is Jesus—never again to be spat upon, never again to be robbed in misery. This is Jesus uncovered, in His splendor before mortal eyes. Once you've been engulfed by His glory, you're never the same. Isaiah—Woe to me! Peter-get away from me (sinful) . . . John-fell at His feet tho dead! It was a glimpse of His glory that transformed Saul the Antagonist into Paul the Apologist. Once you've seen the glory of the risen saviour, you're never the same. He is the subject of the Revelation.

### II THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE REVELATION (vs. 1b)

This must be read in the light of the blazing fire of human persecution. Rev. was written during the terrible time of Domitian persecution—95 or 96 A.D. The situation was ominous for the church. The embryonic Christian community was the constant target of imperial harassment. The prospect has terrifying possibilities for believers. Domitian . . . God (demanded worship) . . . John . . . writing . . . *Fortified*.

They needed a message of hope! Adversity was assailing them with hurricane force. The glowing sunvises were being transformed into darkest nights. Their highest hopes were blasted! Their noblest dreams were shattered! The storms of disappointment were raging! The winds of disaster were blowing! Tidal waves of grief were beating against their lives, their emotional lives were being ripped to shreds. They had gone into the kitchen of sorrow and had licked the pan! Yet from the dark Patmos cave John says, "Take your eyes off of your circumstances and put them on Jesus!" THAT'S WHAT JOHN DID! John was never so near to God as when he was dumped on that island. The Patmos of Roman persecution suddenly became the door to sabline communion with heavenly things. The chains bound the body of John but they never bound his soul. He was free in his spirit to be transported vision to see the apostle began to soar with prophetic ecstasy. He was shut out from the world around him so he just spent his time wandering through the heavenlies. And thus the bleakest of circumstances emerges the most comprehensive delineation of future events known to man. He took his eyes off his circumstances and greatness came out of tragedy. That's the message to Christians in the 7 churches of Asia Minor. It is a revelation for His servants.

Am I speaking to someone who is the dust of despair? You've been overcome by pressure on every hand. Are marital or financial problems taking their toll? Has the bottom fallen out? Is there a smile on your face

but a tear in your eye? Let me encourage you to take your eyes off the stormy sea, put your eyes on the Lord for whom the sea became a soft smooth carpet. Put your eyes on Jesus! He can transform bleak and desolate valleys into sunlit paths of joy and bring new light into dark caverns of trouble. He gives us the inner equilibrium to stand tall amid the trials and burdens of life.

Sanctified—"must"

Don't bow to Domitian—Ultimate victory is Jesus. It is God's will that everyone of us accept His son and live a sanctified life. I John 1:7

We can believe the signs of His 2nd coming because He authenticated the signs . . . 1st coming—He made good on the promise of incarnation . . . consumation in case you don't believe He'll turn signs into reality . . . listen to what He's already done:

Gen 3:15 Seed of a woman Gal 4:4  
 Gen 12:3 Seed of Abraham Matt 1:1  
 Gen 17:19 Seed of Issac Lk 3:34  
 Gen 119:10 Tribe of Judah Lk 3:33  
 Micah 5:2 Born in Bethlehem Lk 2:4  
 Isa 7:14 Born of a virgin Lk 1:31  
 Hosea 11:1 Flight to Egypt Matt 2:15  
 Ps 78:2 Speak in parables Matt 13:34  
 Isa 61:1 Heal brokenhearted  
 Isa 53:3 Rejected-own Jn 1:11  
 Ps 41:9 Betrayed by a friend Lk 22:48  
 Isa 53:7 Silent to accusation Mk 15:5  
 Zech 12:10 Pierced Jn 20:27  
 Ps 22:10 My God Mt 27:46  
 Isa 53:9 Buried with the rich Mt 27:60  
 Ps 49:15—Resurrection—Mk 16:6

(Not everyone saw Him as John did—\*Christ in Book of the Bible)

John does not see Jesus in Revelation as a dead man. John see's Jesus in Ch. 5:6 as a lamb slain from the foundation of the world. And all the redeemed of the Lord kneel before the unveiled Jesus and cry "Worthy is the Lamb" . . .

Praise God for the unveiled Jesus!!!!

### Jesus in the New Testament

Matthew	Messiah
Mark	Wonder-Worker
Luke	Son of Man
John	Son of God
Acts	Holy Ghost
Romans	Justifier
Corinthians	Gifts of the Spirit
Galatians	Man who sets us free
Ephesians	Christ of Riches
Philippians	One who meets our every need
Colossians	Fulness of the God-head
Thessalonians	Soon-Coming King
Timothy	Mediator Between God and Man
Titus	Faithful Pastor
Philemon	Friend that sticks closer than a brother
Hebrews	Blood that washed my sins away
James	Great Physician
Peter	Chief Shepherd
John	Everlasting love
Jude	Lord coming down with 10,000 saints in his hand
Revelation	King of Kings, Lord of Lords

For release after 1:50 PM, Monday, June 12, 1989

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### "The Cross Is the CruX" (1 Corinthians 2:1-5)

by Gordon C. Graham

As a teenager growing up in Houston, Texas there were many occa-

sions when I would hear my parents say to me "Son, the crux of the matter is this." The word CRUX is an interesting word. It is defined as "the basic essential, or the central feature." It comes from a LATIN word that means CROSS.

My friends, without question the CROSS of our Lord Jesus Christ must always be the crux of our message. It remains and should always be the "basic essential, and the central feature" of every message that we as pastors preach and proclaim to a sin-riddled world.

When the faithful Apostle Paul came to Corinth there were many messages he could have proclaimed. He could have used all of his human wisdom and philosophy about the current issues and problems, but Paul did not come to Corinth as a philosopher but as a witness. He came proclaiming the testimony of God. To the Apostle Paul, God's marvelous revelation was everything; human wisdom was absolutely nothing. The people of Corinth were taken and impressed with flowing words and the verbiage of certain "wise" men. Paul knew that his own human wisdom and understanding was worthless when compared to the revelation of God. So, in this passage of scripture the Apostle Paul assures the people of the Corinthian church that he is not coming in the power of human philosophy or opinion. He proclaims to them the testimony of God and nothing else.

People today do not come to church to hear our wisdom! They do not come to our churches to hear the pastor's opinions about politics, or about the economy, or about psychology. They come to our churches to hear a sure word from the Lord through the pastor.

Paul warned Timothy in I Timothy 4:1-2, "The Spirit explicitly says that in the later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons, by means of the hypocrisy of liars seared in their own conscience as with a branding iron." In verse 13 Paul says that Timothy is to "give attention to the public reading of scripture, to exhortation and teaching."

My friends, that is every preacher's responsibility and duty. Any other approach is an affront to God.

In his second letter to Timothy, the Apostle Paul encourages him "in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus to preach the Word." (II Timothy 4:1-2) I cannot understand how any pastor can do anything else but proclaim the unfailing Word of God.

Now please note: When Paul came to the Corinthians and preached to them he was determined to know nothing among his hearers except JESUS CHRIST and HIM CRUCIFIED. The Crux of his message then and always was the CROSS of our Lord Jesus Christ. He knew that the CROSS was to be the basic essential of his message. For the Cross is the foundation of any proclamation He might make.

Brethren, times still have not changed. The bedrock, the foundation of any message you proclaim must still be the Cross of Jesus.

Admiral Shortpaddle, on his battleship, sighted a light on the horizon dead ahead. He instructed his radio man to send the following message: Change your course 10° to the north. The response came back: Change your course 10° to the south. The Admiral was put out by this response and instructed his radio man as follows: I am an Admiral. Change your course 10° to the north. The response was: I am a Seaman 1st Class. Change your course 10° to the south. The Admiral was infuriated and he instructed the radio man to send this message: I repeat - change your course 10° to the north for I am a battleship. The response was, you had better change your course 10° to the south for I am a lighthouse standing on solid rock.

The solid rock of every message we preach is the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. - When We Preach About:

#### I. MISSIONS - The Cross is the Crux.

As we attempt to fulfill Matthew 28:19-20, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen" - what is the basis of our message? It is the cross. Why do we go to the four corners of the earth? Because the cross of Christ compels us. Why do we send out missionaries all over the globe? Why do we have a Lottie Moon offering in December and an Annie Armstrong offering in the spring and a state mission offering in the fall? It is because of the cross of our blessed Lord Jesus! It is the cross of Christ that makes us different from the social organizations and social messages of our day.

When We Preach About:

#### II. TITHING - The Cross is the Crux.

Why do we give to the local church? Why do we support our Co-operative Program and our local associations? Because, "Jesus paid it all, all to Him I owe, sin had left a crimson stain, He washed it white as snow." Why do we give? "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." (John 3:16)

When We Preach About:

#### III. FORGIVENESS - The Cross is the Crux.

Ours is a world that cries out for forgiveness. Ours is a guilt-ridden nation that longs to be forgiven. The message that we can proclaim from our pulpits is I John 1:7, 9, "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 . . . If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." We can boldly proclaim this message because of the cross of our Lord Jesus.

During one Vacation Bible School, I was going from room to room peering through the glass at the precious children at work. A five year old class was working with clay. The little girls were making houses, dolls and cookies, but all the little boys could make were snakes. I saw a little red headed boy edging closer and closer to a little girl and her newly created house. He kept looking at her house then at his snake. Finally, he took his little fist and crushed the little girl's prize. As the tears flowed, a Godly Vacation School teacher put her arm around the crying child and said, "Don't cry sugar, we can add some water to it, remold it and make it over again." There is a message of forgiveness that can be proclaimed today: Our lives, our homes, and our country can be made over again and it's all because of the CROSS of our Lord Jesus.

When We Preach About:

#### IV. HOPE - The CROSS is the CRUX.

A few weeks ago my secretary told me there was a young lady in the office to see me. She came in holding a little ten month old son. She said she had heard our worship service on the radio and that she needed my help. Her husband had just had a tumor removed from his leg; while convalescing he had lost his job; their rent on a mobile home was four months late; their car was about to be repossessed and they just had a few cans of food left. As she wept, she asked, "Is there any word of hope that you can give me?" She wasn't asking for my financial assistance. She wanted a word of hope.

Everyday people see their hopes and dreams shattered. Whether it be the hope of a happy home, or economic stability, or a life of good health, hopes and dreams are crushed with the shattering thud of reality. In the midst of the realities of life, you and I have a message of hope. It is the only hope that our world has today and it is found in the cross of our Lord Jesus. In the midst of hurt and pain and instability, there remains one who is the same yesterday, today, and forever more. That is why the Apostle Paul could say in Galatians 6:14, "But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world."

Twelve years ago, the doctors informed me that I was going to die. Both of my kidneys had failed and my body would not tolerate dialysis. My only chance to live came from the prospect of a kidney transplant. I want to tell you that I have a big brother whose name is Ray. He gave me one of his own kidneys and in so doing he gave me the gift of life. I will never quit telling people of my big brother Ray and what he did for me.

Nineteen hundred years ago there was one who is closer than a brother that went to a hill called Calvary and there on an old rugged cross gave everything for me that I might have eternal life, and I will never quit telling people what he did for me - His name is Jesus. And His Cross is the Crux of our message.

**For release after 3:50 PM, Monday, June 12, 1989**

*Rick Warren is the founding pastor of Saddleback Valley Community Church, Mission Viejo, Calif. Begun in 1980 with one family, the church has grown to 4,000 members and has sponsored 13 new churches. He is a graduate of California Baptist College, Riverside, Calif., and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, Tex. He often leads seminars on church growth, leadership, and preaching and is the author of Twelve Dynamic Bible Study Methods and Answers to Life's Difficult Questions. He and his wife Kay have two sons and one daughter.*

### **"Dealing with Discouragement in Your Ministry" (Nehemiah 4:6-14)**

**by Rick Warren**

What can you do when you have the world's deadliest disease? No, it's not cancer, not polio, not MS, and not AIDS. It's *discouragement*.

Why is discouragement such a dreaded disease? First, because it's uni-

versal. All of us get discouraged. I do, you do, we all do. Discouragement is common. Even Christians get discouraged. Second, because it's recurring. You can get discouragement a number of times. It's not just a one-time thing. Third, because it's highly contagious. Other people can get discouraged because *you're* discouraged.

#### NOW THE GOOD NEWS

But the good news is that discouragement is also curable. A story from the life of Nehemiah (chap. 4) illustrates four causes and three cures for discouragement. You recall that the man Nehemiah was a leader of the Jewish group that had returned to Israel from Babylon to rebuild the wall around Jerusalem. When they had first started on the wall, they had had a lot of fervor and zeal and were very excited about the project. But after working awhile they got discouraged.

Chapter 4 of Nehemiah shows why people get discouraged and how to overcome that discouragement—what to do when you feel like giving up. "So we rebuilt the wall until all of it reached half its height, for the people worked with all their heart" (4:6). Verses 10-12 continue: "Meanwhile, the people in Judah said, The strength of the laborers is giving out, and there is so much rubble that we cannot rebuild the wall. Also our enemies said, Before they know it or see us, we will be right there among them and will kill them and put an end to the work. Then the Jews who live near them came and told us ten times over, Wherever you turn, they will attack us."

#### JUST PLAIN TIRED

Why do people get discouraged? The first reason is *fatigue*. The people in Judah said, "The strength of the laborers is giving out." In other words, they had worked a long time and were physically exhausted. They were just plain worn out—physically and emotionally drained.

Sometimes people come to me for counseling who incorrectly think that their discouragement is a spiritual problem. They say, "Maybe I just need to recommit my life to the Lord." But their real problem is that they're just burned out. They just need some rest, relaxation, and renewal. So I tell them, "You don't need to recommit your life—you just need some rest." Sometimes the most spiritual thing you can do is just go to bed and relax, or take an affordable two-week vacation.

When do fatigue and discouragement come about? Look at verse 6: "So we rebuilt the wall till all of it reached half its height." Do you know when you're apt to get discouraged the most? When you're halfway through a project. Everybody works hard at first. These people "worked with all their heart" (v. 6). Why? Because of the newness of the project. It was novel at first, but after awhile the newness wore off and the work got boring. Life settled down into a rut, then a routine, then a ritual.

Have you ever painted a room? You get halfway through it and then look around and say, "Man, I'm getting tired, and I'm just half-finished. Not only that, but after I'm finished I've got to clean everything up."

I did a fatiguing thing not long ago. I tried to reorganize my filing cabinets. Do you know what it means to clean out your filing cabinets? It means that you take all the things out of your file, then put them in different piles all over the floor; then you get discouraged and put everything back the way it was!

Have you ever started to climb a mountain and thought, "It'll only take me four hours to get to the top"? But when you're halfway to the top you've already spent five hours! So you think, "Shall I keep going? I've got to go that far back down again too!" Suddenly you start thinking, "Maybe it's God's will that I go back down." Fatigue is the number one cause of discouragement, and it often happens right about the midpoint. That's why so many people seldom complete anything.

#### OVERCOMING FRUSTRATION

But there's a second reason why people get discouraged. The people said, "There is so much rubble that we cannot build the wall" (v. 10). That's *frustration*. They were discouraged and frustrated. What's rubble? They were building a new wall, but old broken rocks were everywhere, along with dirt and dried-out mortar. When they looked at the rubble and the debris they got discouraged. They lost sight of their goal because there was so much junk in their lives that they didn't know how to get to the real business of living.

Whenever you do a project some waste is going to accumulate, and it can get to be pretty frustrating. Have you ever expanded a room or constructed a building? All of a sudden you notice piles of plaster all over the place. Or you paint a room, and there's more paint everywhere else than on the walls! The trash just seems to multiply. You can't avoid rubbish in life, but you *can* learn to recognize it and you *can* learn what to do with it so you don't give up on your original plan.

What is the rubbish in your life? It's the trivial things that waste your time and consume your energy and frustrate you, that keep you from

becoming all you want to be, that keep you from doing the things that are really most important in life. The rubbish in your life is those things that get in your way, the interruptions that keep you from accomplishing your goals. These are the things we need to clean away in our lives.

#### MAKING FAILURE TEMPORARY

The third reason why people get discouraged is also covered in verse 10: "We cannot rebuild the wall." Do you know what they were saying? "We can't do it. It's impossible. It's foolish to try. We give up." The third cause of discouragement is *failure*. The people were unable to finish their task as quickly as they had originally planned, and as a result their confidence went down the tubes. They lost heart and got discouraged. They said, "We can't do it, so we're just going to give up."

How do you handle failure in your life? Do you have a pity party? Do you say, "Oh, poor me. I can't get this job done"? Do you start complaining? "It's impossible. It can't be done. I was a fool to even try. It's stupid."

Or do you blame other people? "Everybody else let me down. They didn't do their parts of the job." The difference between winners and losers is that winners always see failure as being only a temporary setback.

#### STOPPED BY FEAR?

There's a fourth reason why people get discouraged. Nehemiah's people put it this way: "Our enemies said, Before they know it or see us, we will be right there among them and will kill them and put an end to the work" (v. 11). There were people in the land of Israel who did not want the wall to be built; they were the enemies of the Jews. A wall around the city represented safety and defense, so these enemies did not want the wall to be finished. So first they criticized the Jews, then they ridiculed them, and finally they threatened them: "We're going to kill you if you keep on building the wall." So the wall-builders got discouraged. Why? Because of the fourth cause of discouragement, *fear*.

Notice who it was that got discouraged. It was "the Jews who lived near" the enemy (v. 12). Then they discouraged others by saying, "Wherever you turn, they will attack us." When you hang around a negative person long enough, you know what happens. You pick up his negativism too. If you hear somebody keep saying, "It can't be done," you'll start believing him.

Do you have fears that are discouraging you right now—fears that are preventing you from developing and growing? Do you fear criticism or embarrassment? Are you afraid to take the big step and get the new job? Maybe it's a fear that you're not capable for the task. Maybe it's a fear that you can't hold up under the pressure. Maybe it's a fear that you have to be perfect. Fear *always discourages you*.

How can you tell if your discouragement is being caused by fear? You have a deep, intense desire to run: "I've got to get out of this place!" You have an intense desire to escape from life's demands and pressures. The natural reaction of fear is always to run. In life there are only three ways you can move—*against* something in anger, *away* from it in fear, or *with* it in love.

What is the antidote to this terrible disease of discouragement? Notice what Nehemiah did as a wise leader and a man of God. He knew what it was that discouraged people, so he took the appropriate actions to correct the problem. There are four principles to help you when you feel like giving up, and here they are in a nutshell: *Reorganize, remember, resist, and rest*.

#### FIND A BETTER WAY

Nehemiah used the *reorganize* principle: "Therefore I stationed some of the people behind the lowest points of the wall at the exposed places, posting them by families, with their swords, spears, and bows" (v. 13). Nehemiah said, "We're going to get this thing really organized. We're going to get a new system here. You people get over there, and you other people stand here, and we'll get this problem solved."

The first principle in conquering discouragement is this: *Reorganize your life*. When you get discouraged, *don't give up on your goals*. Instead, *devise a new approach*. When you get discouraged, it doesn't necessarily mean that you're doing the wrong thing; you can be doing the right thing in the wrong way. Was it wrong for these Jews to be building the wall? Absolutely not; it was the right thing. But they were doing the right thing in the wrong way, and as a result they got discouraged.

Do you have a problem? Reorganize your life. A problem in your marriage? Don't give up on it. Try a new attitude. A problem in your business? Don't give up on it. Try a new approach. A problem in your Christian living? Don't give up on it. Try a new prayer. A problem with your health? Try a new doctor. Just *don't give up. Keep on keeping on*.

Some of you are discouraged because you are under tremendous pres-

sure; your work load is unbelievable. God's message to you is *reorganize*. Reorganize your time; reorganize your schedule; refocus on your goal. Clear out the clutter and rubble and trivia, the things that are wasting your time. Then reorganize so you work toward your main goal.

Not long ago I was reminded at a seminar of the 80/20 principle: About 80 percent of our time is usually spent on the 20 percent of our activities that are not productive. As a result we are frustrated. What we need to do instead is spend 80 percent of our time on the 20 percent of our job that produces the most results. Managers call this ROI time—"Return On Investment" time. In other words, use the maximum time on those few things that get the greatest results.

Notice that Nehemiah focused on priorities. When he reorganized, he posted the people by families. Why? Because he knew that anybody who is discouraged needs a support group. When one person in a family gets discouraged, other members will lift him up. We need our fellow Christians to support each other and encourage each other. When I get down, you lift me up, and when you get down, I lift you up. That's a support group.

Solomon says, "Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work: if one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up! Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm. But how can one keep warm alone? Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. And a cord of three strands is not quickly broken" (Ecc. 4:9-12). What is he saying? That it is important to have other people in our lives in order to help us and encourage us.

#### REMEMBER YOUR LEADER

How else do you overcome discouragement? By remembering your Lord. Notice what Nehemiah said: "After I looked things over, I stood up and said to the nobles, the officials, and the rest of the people, 'Don't be afraid of them. Remember the Lord, who is great and awesome'" (Neh. 4:14). What does it mean to "remember the Lord"? It means to recommit yourself to Him. It means to rededicate yourself to Him. It means to draw on His spiritual power.

What specifically do you remember? Three things. First, remember God's goodness to you in the past. When you start thinking about all the good things that God has already done in your life, your spirit will be lifted. Second, remember God's closeness in the present. What is God doing in your life right now? He is with you whether you feel Him or not, because He said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you" (Heb. 13:5). You may not be calling on God, but He is still there. Third, remember God's power for the future—He will give you strength for your needs. "I can do everything through" Christ, because He strengthens me (Phil. 4:13). When you get discouraged, get your mind off your circumstances and on the Lord. For circumstances depress and discourage.

Remember, your thoughts determine your feelings. If you feel discouraged it's because you're thinking discouraging thoughts. If you want to feel encouraged instead, start thinking encouraging thoughts. Choose some uplifting Bible verses to memorize: "I can do all things through Christ, who strengthens me" (Phil. 4:13, KJV). Nothing can separate me "from the love of God" (Rom. 8:39). "If God is for us, who can be against us?" (Rom. 8:31) "Everything is possible for him who believes" (Mark 9:23).

#### FIGHT THE GLOOMY OUTLOOK

How else do you fight discouragement? By resisting the discouragement. Notice what Nehemiah says: "Fight for your brothers, your sons and your daughters, your wives and your homes" (Neh. 4:14b). What is Nehemiah saying? "Don't yield to discouragement without a fight. Resist discouragement. Fight it. Don't give in to it, but resist it."

The Bible teaches that we who are Christians are in a spiritual warfare, a battle. We are in a supernatural conflict, a combat with negative forces. The Bible says that the devil is the accuser of Christians; he loves to get us down. That is his number one tool, because he knows that a discouraged Christian has limited potential. He knows that when we're down, our effectiveness is neutralized. So he does everything he can to discourage us. James says, "Resist the devil" (James 4:7). Resist him and his negative thoughts—all the discouragement he tries to bring into your life.

You do not have to be discouraged in life. It's your choice. You may choose to give in to it. But great people simply refuse to be discouraged. They don't know how to quit. They never give up even when they're fatigued and frustrated and have failed and are fearful. Great people are ordinary people with extraordinary amounts of persistence. They just hang in there and never give up.

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## "Living for Jesus" (1 Timothy 1:11-17)

by Howard L. Gates

When Sir Wilfred Grenfell was enlisting volunteers for his missionary endeavors in Labrador, he exclaimed that he could not promise them much money, but if they would follow him, they would have the time of their lives. Sometimes we become discouraged because serving Christ is so difficult. In reality the Bible never promises an easy experience; in fact, the opposite is true. As we live and work for Jesus, we must expect hardship, suffering and even persecution. If we remain faithful, however, we can have the time of our lives! Then, when we arrive at the end of the road, we will find a great and eternal reward.

When Timothy received this letter from the Apostle Paul, he desperately needed encouragement. He was facing great difficulties, but Paul encouraged his young understudy to be faithful and keep living for Jesus. The young preacher must be faithful to the gospel message, faithful to his work, faithful to his people, and most of all faithful to his Savior. Of course, the compelling motive for our faithfulness lies in the faithfulness of our God.

Timothy needed this word of encouragement because he was facing some very serious difficulties. For one thing, he had a physical problem with his digestion (1 Timothy 5:23). I wonder how many of us here tonight have some physical ailment? Nearly all of us. Whether it be a digestive condition, a vision problem, rising blood pressure, arthritis, impending surgery - and the list could go on indefinitely - each of us lives with a physical body that eventually breaks down.

Timothy also had a temperamental problem. He was going through a period of discouragement and was easily intimidated by some of his church members. How many here can identify with that? You become discouraged, or frightened, or anxious, or lonely. We are God's men, but we are still men.

Then Timothy was having a congregational problem. Some were attempting to dilute the honey of God's grace with the vinegar of Jewish legalism. Trying to teach a group of Christians who are unwilling to learn can be a terribly frustrating experience.

Finally, Timothy encountered a location problem. He was serving in Ephesus, a very difficult city. Ephesus was the center of the pagan cult of Diana. Are you serving in a difficult place? I cannot speak for you, but I don't know of any other kind. If you hear of an easy place to serve, please let me know!

Paul is aware of Timothy's struggles, and so he encourages his young son in the faith to keep living and ministering for the Lord. As Paul opens his letter of encouragement, the great apostle pauses to thank God for his own conversion, call, and opportunities to serve. Paul has also faced great difficulties along the way, perhaps greater suffering than any Christian in history, yet he is still able to thank God. We can learn much from Paul's attitude. In studying this prayer of thanksgiving which our text preserves, you are able to trace Paul's motives for ministry. You are able to see why he can serve Christ joyfully and thankfully in the face of great suffering. Usually we study the Pastoral Letters to learn *what* to do, but here we discover *why* we do it.

Why do I live for the Lord Jesus? Why can I keep on serving joyfully and thankfully even in times of great distress?

#### I. Jesus Will Trust Me!

We find this astounding claim in verse 11 - "According to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust." It is wonderful that I can trust Jesus, but it is simply astounding that Jesus can trust me!

Paul was amazed that Jesus would trust him with the gospel. Think of it! An arch enemy of Christ becoming his ambassador and an apostle! A murderer becoming a missionary and minister! A persecuter becoming a preacher and pioneer for Christ! Jesus not only forgave Saul of Tarsus, the Lord also entrusted him with a call to the ministry.

The divine call is the only motive for entering the ministry. Once

called, we serve out of many motives; but a conviction that this is the will of God is the only valid reason for entering the pastorate. I believe you would agree with me that the ministry is no place for a man who isn't called. An older pastor, speaking to a group of young preachers, said, "Were you sent, or did you just want?" Heaven help the man that just went.

The call of God is a sacred trust, a stewardship. The Lord has entrusted me with my call to ministry; he has entrusted me with the gospel itself; he has entrusted me with that local congregation which I serve. To say that my call is a trust means that God holds me accountable and that one day I will give an account. Ultimately, the standard which God will use in evaluating my service is whether I have been faithful to that trust. Not successful necessarily, but faithful.

An old pastor once said that the Bible is God's newspaper. The headlines read "Jesus Saves." He then said, "We preachers are God's newsboys. Our calling is to throw the newspaper on the front porch of the house. Some ministers throw the paper on top of the roof; they shoot over the heads of the people, they use language that people cannot understand. Other preachers throw the paper under the porch. They become bogged down in administrative details, they do not study, they do not prepare, and the congregation is not fed. The task of the pastor is to throw the paper on the porch of the house."

That is what we are to do. We are to tell them about Jesus who was made sin that we might be made saints.

We are to tell them about Jesus who came to an unprepared manger that we might go to a prepared mansion.

We are to tell them about Jesus who bore a curse that we might be blessed forever.

We are to tell them about Jesus who was weary that we might have rest.

We are to tell them of Jesus who fasted in the wilderness that we might have the Bread of Life.

We are to tell them of Jesus who thirsted that we might have the water of life.

We are to tell them of Jesus, who was clothed in scarlet that we might be clothed in white raiment.

We are to tell them of Jesus, who wore a crown of thorns that we might wear a crown of life.

We are to tell them of Jesus, who walked the shores of Galilee that we might walk the streets of gold.

We are to tell them of Jesus, who wept so that our tears might be wiped away.

We are to tell them of Jesus, who took the cup of suffering that we might take the cup of salvation.

To carry that message is a sacred trust, an honor and privilege, a high calling of God, and if I am unfaithful, the result is damage to the cause of Jesus Christ.

## II. Jesus Will Help Me!

Paul affirms the divine assistance of Jesus Christ in verse 12: "And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me . . ."

Jesus Christ never gives the Christian a task without also providing the power to carry it through. No minister is good enough, no minister is strong enough, no minister is pure enough or wise enough to do his work in human strength. Yet the same Lord who gave saving grace now provides serving grace.

At times the going will be very rough, and one way that Jesus helps us is to give us assistance through the dark valleys. Things were never easy for Paul. When he wrote the book of Philippians, the apostle was advancing in years; he was the victim of persecution; he was in prison and alone; and even some professing Christians were preaching Christ out of insincerity, supposing to add affliction to Paul's chain. Yet the apostle could write, "The things which have happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel" (Phil. 1:12).

Paul learned that even the difficulties were part of God's plan for spreading the gospel. Have you ever considered your troubles in that light? Instead of measuring your trials by what they do to you, try evaluating them by what they do for the gospel.

A man once told me, "The Lord has been good to me. I made a lot of money this year." I felt like saying, "If you had lost a lot of money, God would still have been good to you." You see, the goodness of God encompasses more than physical or material circumstances. He has saved you; if that were his only blessing, that alone would be sufficient. He has promised to walk with you daily; that also is a mighty evidence for the goodness of God. One day he will take you to the Father's house of many mansions; heaven is another indisputable evidence of God's goodness and grace.

Sometimes, however, we forget that one of the greatest demonstrations

of God's goodness is the way he uses our afflictions. He employs them not only to help us grow but also for his glory and the spread of the gospel. Maybe the staff is not loyal or productive. Perhaps the laymen will not cooperate and follow leadership. Perhaps the church does not grow as rapidly as I would like. Perhaps they do not pay enough, and financial matters are tight. Perhaps the ministry has brought special pressures upon my family. These sufferings may not be pleasant but they are permitted by the Heavenly Father, and he can use them.

Often we cannot see the value in our difficulties because we are limited by a human perspective. Spiritually, we are nearsighted. Because we cannot see the end result in God's plan, we do not have the wisdom to distinguish between what is really good or really bad. Pat Neff, a former governor of Texas, used to tell a humorous story which emphasized that pleasant things may turn out to be a burden and painful experiences may in fact be blessings.

Mr. Neff's anecdote involved a school teacher, who told a good friend that she had just married a millionaire. The friend's eyes lit up as she exclaimed, "That's good!"

The teacher almost cut her off in mid-sentence: "But he is very stingy." So the friend altered her evaluation and said, "That's bad."

The young teacher went on, "He built me a lovely mansion." To which her friend answered, "That's good."

The teacher continued, "But the mansion burned down." By this time the friend was getting confused. Nevertheless she answered, "That's bad."

The young teacher then said, "But my husband was in it." Her friend did not know what to say.

Events happen which we interpret as blessings because they are pleasing. Later on we may find that they were really not so beneficial. Other things happen which may hurt, yet with the passing of time we see how God has used them. God sees the completed design, and from the standpoint of eternity the entire plan is good. That is what Romans 8:28 is all about. "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose."

Jesus will help me, sometimes by giving me a new perspective on my troubles.

## III. Jesus Will Use Me!

Another powerful motive for service is the realization that Jesus will use me, however unworthy or inadequate I may feel. Paul writes, "I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry; who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious; but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus" (vs. 12-14).

Paul was amazed that God could use him because of his own background. He describes himself as a blasphemer, one who denied the deity of Jesus Christ. He was a persecutor who inflicted physical harm to the saints of God. He was injurious, which conveys exactly what we mean with the word "bully." Paul was useful not because of his own goodness but because of God's grace.

The grace of God is magnified when he chooses a seemingly unlikely candidate. To slay the giant Goliath, God used a little boy with a sling in his hand and faith in his heart. To bring the message of healing to Naaman God chose a little slave girl. To preach on the day of Pentecost God chose a cursing fisherman. To establish Paul in the Christian life, God chose a man that otherwise we would have never known about, Ananias.

If God can use these ordinary people, he can use even me! I may not be as handsome as others, I may not be as educated as others, I may not be as gifted as others, I may not have the same opportunities as others, but I have the same Lord Jesus Christ! Paul said, "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief" (I Tim. 1:15). Are you a sinner saved by grace? If so, Jesus will use you. Just put your weak life in his strong hands and depend upon his grace.

Opportunities to be used of God can occur in the strangest ways. One Wednesday night after church, my wife was driving home with our little daughter, Stephanie, age 6, and her little friend, whom I will call Debbie. Earlier this year I had the privilege of baptizing Stephanie, which was one of the greatest joys of my life.

On this particular occasion Stephanie was telling Debbie about the death of her goldfish. Debbie said, "When fish die, they go to heaven."

With all the wisdom of a six year old Stephanie corrected her: "At our house they go in the trash."

Debbie then commented, "At our house we bury them."

To which Stephanie replied, "We do not bury fish, we bury people."

On a more serious note Debbie then asked, "What does happen to animals when they die?"

To which Stephanie said, "Mom, that's one for you!"

I do not know how my wife answered, but I do know that this year

Debbie also made her profession of faith in Christ. Perhaps Jay's response to that question was one small instrument that God used. Opportunities to be used of God appear every day. Children ask questions. Teenagers have dating problems. Young adults have a baby. Median adults go through a divorce. Senior adults go into the hospital. A young couple gets married. I may feel unworthy and inadequate, but God's grace can use even me.

#### IV. Jesus Will Reward Me!

In our text Paul introduces a theme which becomes prominent in both I and II Timothy, the Kingship of Jesus. "Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen" (v. 17). Jesus is the Reigning King!

We read again in chapter six, "That thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukeable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ: which in his times he shall shew, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of Kings, and Lord of lords" (vs. 14-15). He is not just the Reigning King, he is the Returning King.

Finally we read in II Timothy, "I charged thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom" (II Tim. 4:1). Jesus is the Rewarding King.

Jesus Christ has all authority, and one day we shall stand in his presence and give an account of the ministry. Jesus will judge *what* we do. He will also judge *how* we do it, whether we served with the integrity and high standards which he ordains. He will also judge *why* we serve. What are our motives for ministry?

We have many valid motives, but the very highest is the glory of Christ. So when Paul talks about his ministry, he concludes with that great word of doxology in verse 17. He moves from theology to doxology. "Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen."

Do you and I serve that Christ might be glorified? Do we serve to lead others to bring glory to his name? Do we remember that he is indeed the King, and that on his team we cannot possibly fail? Dr. George Green, the famous missionary, went up the river to Africa to dedicate his life in service to the Master. As he went up the river he heard the war drums pounding. The natives were preparing to go to war with one another. The boat captain tried to persuade Dr. Green not to get off the boat, but the missionary insisted. Years later, after a life poured out in sacrifice for the Master, Dr. Green boarded another boat to leave Africa. He came down the same river and heard the drums again. This time, however, the natives had lined the banks and were singing:

All hail the power of Jesus' name  
Let angels prostrate fall,  
Bring forth the royal diadem,  
And crown him Lord of all.

That is why you can carry on in the ministry. Jesus is Lord and he is in control. Live for Jesus, because he is still the King!

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### "Sounding the Trumpet" (1 Corinthians 14:6-9)

by J. Harold Smith

**I CORINTHIANS 14:6-9—"NOW BRETHREN, IF I COME UNTO YOU SPEAKING WITH TONGUES, WHAT SHALL I PROFIT YOU, EXCEPT I SHALL SPEAK TO YOU EITHER BY REVELATION, OR BY KNOWLEDGE, OR BY PROPHEYSYING, OR BY DOCTRINE? AND EVEN THINGS WITHOUT LIFE GIVING SOUND, WHETHER PIPE OR HARP, EXCEPT THEY GIVE A DISTINCTION IN THE SOUNDS, HOW SHALL IT BE KNOWN WHAT IS PIPED OR HARPED? FOR IF THE TRUMPET GIVE AN UNCERTAIN SOUND, WHO SHALL PREPARE HIMSELF TO THE BATTLE? SO LIKEWISE YE, EXCEPT YE UTTER BY THE TONGUE WORDS EASY TO BE UNDERSTOOD, HOW SHALL IT**

### **BE KNOWN WHAT IS SPOKEN? FOR YE SHALL SPEAK INTO THE AIR."**

One would have to go back into the Old Testament and find the reference to the trumpets to really appreciate the Apostle Paul and what he had in mind when he wrote this passage under the leadership of the Holy Spirit.

The trumpet was used to sound the note of victory, the note of warning, and the approach of the enemy.

There are three questions I want to ask and answer in this message . . . questions which I believe will help you in "sounding the trumpet." Who is to sound the trumpet? Why should we sound the trumpet? What are the notes we are to sound upon God's trumpet?

#### **I. WHO IS TO SOUND THE TRUMPET?**

The Scriptures declare that God-called preachers, pastors, evangelists and Bible teachers are charged to "sound the trumpet." Believing that there is a special, unique call to the ministry of preaching the Gospel of Christ, and that God selects certain men to preach His Word, all such men should faithfully discharge this duty.

**ISAIAH 58:1—"CRY ALOUD, SPARE NOT, LIFT UP THY VOICE LIKE A TRUMPET, AND SHEW MY PEOPLE THEIR TRANSGRESSION, AND THE HOUSE OF JACOB THEIR SINS."**

We do not want to be shown our sins. Moses cried aloud against the sins of God's people. Jeremiah did not fail in sounding the trumpet. Elijah would not compromise with the Baal prophets of his day. God's preachers are to speak up and cry aloud against the sins of our day. We must not compromise or conform. Are we sounding the trumpet? Have we become discouraged because so few responded to the sounding of the trumpet?

**II TIMOTHY 4:1-3—"I CHARGE THEE THEREFORE BEFORE GOD, AND THE LORD JESUS CHRIST, WHO SHALL JUDGE THE QUICK AND THE DEAD AT HIS APPEARING AND HIS KINGDOM; PREACH THE WORD; BE INSTANT IN SEASON, OUT OF SEASON; REPROVE, REBUKE, EXHORT WITH ALL LONGSUFFERING AND DOCTRINE. FOR THE TIME WILL COME WHEN THEY WILL NOT ENDURE SOUND DOCTRINE; BUT AFTER THEIR OWN LUSTS SHALL HEAP TO THEMSELVES TEACHERS, HAVING ITCHING EARS."**

Every true born-again, blood-bought, child of God is charged with "sounding the trumpet."

**ACTS 1:8—"BUT YE SHALL RECEIVE POWER, AFTER THAT THE HOLY GHOST IS COME UPON YOU; AND YE SHALL BE WITNESSES UNTO ME BOTH IN JERUSALEM, AND IN ALL JUDEA, AND IN SAMARIA, AND UNTO THE UTTERMOST PART OF THE EARTH."**

Phillip was preaching in Samaria, God ordered him to go join himself to a chariot returning from Jerusalem to Ethiopia. Philip did not debate the issue, he immediately departed for the designated place, and because he left Samaria on God's time schedule, and because the Eunuch left Jerusalem on God's time schedule, the two met at the right time and place.

Philip began to run along side the chariot and he heard the Eunuch (the Treasurer of the Queen of Ethiopia) reading from Isaiah. As Philip ran along he said, "UNDERSTANDETH THOU WHAT THOU READEST?"

The man in the chariot said, "Is the prophet speaking of himself or of another?" "HOW CAN I UNDERSTAND EXCEPT SOME MAN SHOULD GUIDE ME?" And the Bible declares, "THEN PHILIP OPENED HIS MOUTH, AND BEGAN AT THE SAME SCRIPTURE, AND PREACHED UNTO HIM JESUS." The Eunuch, when he heard the sound of the trumpet, said "WHAT DOTTH HINDER ME TO BE BAPTIZED?" Philip said, "Do you believe?" And he replied, "I BELIEVE." Then they both went down into the water and Philip baptized him. The Spirit caught Philip up, and the Eunuch of Ethiopia went on his way rejoicing.

I believe every born-again believer should be a witness, declaring on their trumpet the good news. All of us should be "Trumpet sounders." No one will be excused from this blessed privilege. What sort of trumpeter are you?

#### **II. WHY SHOULD WE SOUND THE TRUMPET?**

First, we are all co-laborers with the Lord. **I CORINTHIANS 3:9—"FOR WE ARE LABOURERS TOGETHER WITH GOD; YE ARE GOD'S HUSBANDRY, YE ARE GOD'S BUILDING."** The sad tragedy of our day is that so many of us do not want to be a "laborer," we want to be the "boss" or the "overseer." God commands us to pray for "more laborers," not "more bosses." Isn't it wonderful to be a co-laborer with Christ? Isn't it a great honor to work in the harvest field with God?

God has called us and we have rebelled! We want to choose our own place, we want to go where we choose and not where God wants us to labor. God may be calling some of you precious young men as pastors, others as evangelists, and some as missionaries. Maybe God is calling some of you wonderful young women to sound the trumpet as a home or foreign missionary, or to be the good wife of a preacher.

**II CORINTHIANS 6:2—“(FOR HE SAITH, I HAVE HEARD THEE IN A TIME ACCEPTED, AND IN THE DAY OF SALVATION HAVE I SUCCOURED THEE; BEHOLD, NOW IS THE ACCEPTED TIME; BEHOLD, NOW IS THE DAY OF SALVATION.)”**

The second reason we are to “sound the trumpet” is because of what is “at stake.” What is at stake? The souls of millions. It seems that “no man” cares for the “souls” of these “lost millions.” **PSALMS 142:4—“I LOOKED ON MY RIGHT HAND, AND BEHELD, BUT THERE WAS NO MAN THAT WOULD KNOW ME: REFUGE FAILED ME; NO MAN CARED FOR MY SOUL.”**

What a sad thing that no one cares! There are so few witnesses. So few who are “sounding the trumpet,” warning these precious souls on their way to Hell. Do you agree that we need to faithfully “sound the trumpet” because souls are lost? I believe the bottom line in all our “activities” should be **SOULS! . . . SOULS! . . . SOULS!** The church has no right to exist if she is not a soul winning church. The three-fold purpose of the church is to preach the Word, reach the lost, and teach the saved.

The third reason we should sound the trumpet is because of the Judgment Seat of Christ. Does it bother you when you think of your appearance at this judgment? We must, if saved, all appear! There are absolutely no exceptions! **I CORINTHIANS 3:11-15—“FOR OTHER FOUNDATION CAN NO MAN LAY THAN THAT IS LAID, WHICH IS JESUS CHRIST. NOW IF ANY MAN BUILD UPON THIS FOUNDATION GOLD, SILVER, PRECIOUS STONES, WOOD, HAY, STUBBLE; EVERY MAN'S WORK SHALL BE MADE MANIFEST: FOR THE DAY SHALL DECLARE IT, BECAUSE IT SHALL BE REVEALED BY FIRE; AND THE FIRE SHALL TRY EVERY MAN'S WORK OF WHAT SORT IT IS. IF ANY MAN'S WORK ABIDE WHICH HE HATH BUILT THEREUPON, HE SHALL RECEIVE A REWARD. IF ANY MAN'S WORK SHALL BE BURNED, HE SHALL SUFFER LOSS: BUT HE HIMSELF SHALL BE SAVED; YET SO AS BY FIRE.”**

We have only six materials out of which we may build . . . gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay and stubble. The first three are noncombustible, are very expensive, and can only be made by the Lord. . . . man cannot produce real gold, silver, or precious stones. The last three are all combustible and are cheap, and all three can be cultivated by man, and knowing that we all will have to face God's fiery furnace at the Judgment Seat of Christ, we should sound the trumpet. How many of us will come away from the Judgment Seat of Christ with only a “bag of ashes” for a reward of a life of service? What a shame? God forbid this should be the “lot” for any man.

**II CORINTHIANS 5:10—“FOR WE MUST ALL APPEAR BEFORE THE JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST; THAT EVERY ONE MAY RECEIVE THE THINGS DONE IN HIS BODY, ACCORDING TO THAT HE HATH DONE, WHETHER IT BE GOOD OR BAD.”**

So, we are going to be tried and the sort of our work will be rewarded. . . . whether good or bad, and we will be accordingly rewarded. This fact ought to keep us all faithfully “sounding the trumpet.”

In the fourth place, we should be sounding the trumpet because of the eternal reward that fadeth not away. **REVELATIONS 22:12—“AND, BEHOLD, I COME QUICKLY; AND MY REWARD IS WITH ME, TO GIVE EVERY MAN ACCORDING AS HIS WORK SHALL BE.”** My “pay day” and yours is still out there in the future. I do not want to lose my “eternal reward.” God forbid that we become “cowards” and fail to “sound the trumpet” in these last days.

### **III. WHAT NOTES SHOULD WE SOUND UPON GOD'S TRUMPET?**

First, we need to get back to preaching “salvation by faith.” This note of grace should be long and loud. We are living in a “strange hour.” Many say the precious blood of Jesus, shed upon the Cross, is not enough. There must be a mixture of Blood and water . . . of Blood plus good works. . . . the Blood and the Lord's Supper . . . the Blood and worship. **“THE BLOOD OF JESUS CHRIST HIS SON CLEANSETH US FROM ALL SIN.” (I JOHN 1:7)** If the Blood cleanseth us from all sin, what does that leave for water, works, or worship to wash away?

**Saved! Saved! Saved!** By what? By **“GRACE. . . . THROUGH FAITH;**

**AND THAT NOT OF YOURSELVES; IT IS THE GIFT OF GOD.” (EPHESIANS 2:8-9). . . . JOHN 3:16—“FOR GOD SO LOVED THE WORLD, THAT HE GAVE HIS ONLY BEGOTTEN SON, THAT WHOSOEVER BELIEVETH IN HIM, SHOULD NOT PERISH, BUT HAVE EVERLASTING LIFE.”**

**JOHN 5:24—“VERILY, VERILY, I SAY UNTO YOU, HE THAT HEARETH MY WORD, AND BELIEVETH ON HIM THAT SENT ME, HATH EVERLASTING LIFE, AND SHALL NOT COME INTO CONDEMNATION; BUT IS PASSED FROM DEATH UNTO LIFE.”**

**I CORINTHIANS 6:20—“FOR YE ARE BOUGHT WITH A PRICE; THEREFORE GLORIFY GOD IN YOUR BODY, AND IN YOUR SPIRIT, WHICH ARE GOD'S.”**

**I CORINTHIANS 7:23—“YE ARE BOUGHT WITH A PRICE; BE NOT YE THE SERVANTS OF MEN.”**

Now I belong to Jesus. He washed me in His Blood. He engraved me in the palm of His hand, He sealed me with the Holy Spirit, and then He placed me in the Hand of God. . . . with my name written in the Lamb's Book of Life.

Here is what the Devil would have to do to get and damn me. He would have to blot my name out of the Book of Life, steal me out of the Hand of God, break the seal of the Holy Spirit, erase me out of the hands of Jesus, and then finally, “get under the Blood of Christ” where I am hid. If it were possible for the Devil to get under the Blood . . . he wouldn't want me.

The second reasons for “sounding the trumpet” is to “sound the note of stewardship” . . . a stewardship of our time, talent, teaching and treasures. Time and space fail us in trying to go into all these areas of our Christian experience . . . back there things are real.

The third note we should sound on our trumpets is “soul winning.” Going into the by-ways and the hedges, and compelling others to come in is not just for our “bus workers,” but for all of us. Sinners are not going to come to our church by a little ad in our paper or announcement on the radio or television. There is nothing on this earth as valuable as a “lost soul.” Let us seek them, find them, and bring them to Christ and His church.

The fourth note we should all sound on the trumpet is the note of “separation.” I am amazed to see the mixing of the church and the world.

**II CORINTHIANS 6:14—“BE YE NOT UNEQUALLY YOKED TOGETHER WITH UNBELIEVERS; FOR WHAT FELLOWSHIP HATH UNRIGHTEOUSNESS? AND WHAT COMMUNION HATH LIGHT WITH DARKNESS: AND WHAT CONCORD HATH CHRIST WITH BELIAL? OR WHAT PART HATH HE THAT BELIEVETH WITH AN INFIDEL? AND WHAT AGREEMENT HATH THE TEMPLE OF GOD WITH IDOLS? FOR YE ARE THE TEMPLE OF THE LIVING GOD; AS GOD HATH SAID, I WILL DWELL IN THEM, AND WALK IN THEM, AND I WILL BE THEIR GOD, AND THEY SHALL BE MY PEOPLE. WHEREFORE COME OUT FROM AMONG THEM, AND BE YE SEPARATE, SAITH THE LORD ALMIGHTY.”**

**I JOHN 2:15-17—“LOVE NOT THE WORLD, NEITHER THE THINGS THAT ARE IN THE WORLD. IF ANY MAN LOVE THE WORLD, THE LOVE OF THE FATHER IS NOT IN HIM. FOR ALL THAT IS IN THE WORLD, THE LUST OF THE FLESH, AND THE LUST OF THE EYES, AND THE PRIDE OF LIFE, IS NOT OF THE FATHER, BUT IS OF THE WORLD. AND THE WORLD PASSETH AWAY, AND THE LUST THEREOF; BUT HE THAT DOETH THE WILL OF GOD ABIDETH FOREVER.”**

The fifth and final note we are to sound on God's trumpet is the Second Coming of Christ. We are, indeed, in the last days. We should be busy, for the night cometh. The blessed hope is our challenge. It is our charge. It is our command. We must not fail to warn our folk, for in such an hour as ye think not He cometh.

**LUKE 12:40—“BE YE THEREFORE READY ALSO; FOR THE SON OF MAN COMETH AT AN HOUR WHEN YE THINK NOT.”**

In closing, who is to “Sound the Trumpet?” Why should we be faithful in sounding the trumpet? And what are the notes we are to sound on the trumpet? How about you and your trumpet? Do you have a clear conscience? Under God, have you been faithful in sounding God's trumpet? Is there someone in Hell this very moment because you failed to sound the trumpet? Are there some who are lost because you failed to sound the trumpet a little louder? Are you a “trumpeter for the Lord?” Is your trumpet giving “an uncertain sound?” We are all recognized by the “Sound of our trumpet.”—Thank you.