

# The Measure of a Man

## Annual Sermon For The Southern Baptist Convention

Text: Rev. 21:17. "According to the Measure of a Man"

**BROTHER PRESIDENT** and dear fellow workers of this Convention:



Dr. Stagg

It is with a sense of deepest humility that I accept this place of honor, responsibility and opportunity. This experience comes because of appreciation of the Southern Baptist Convention for the rapid expansion of western missions and pioneer territory. I am here today with a deep feeling of representing those who have so sacrificially and faithfully led in the development of our faith and practice in this vast new empire, where forty million souls were unaffiliated with any church. There are many fellow ministers who would be more worthy and fitting to stand in this place. However, it is significant that you have invited a speaker today from the western end of the historic Santa Fe Trail, and from Glorieta Pass, in the rugged Rockies, through which trod the earliest civilization on the North American Continent, and from which today the Gospel is beamed around the world. Likewise, it is significant that this momentous convention, so far-reaching in furthering the Kingdom of God, is now in session so near the spot in Independence, Missouri, where the wagon trains and pony express began their western trek.

### SANTA FE ANTEDATES MAYFLOWER

Eighty years before the Pilgrims landed at Plymouth Rock the Conquistadores of ancient Spain gazed upon our colorful Indian villages which have changed but slightly in a thousand years. Ten years before the Mayflower docked, bearing precious dreams and hopes of a full freedom in a new world, old Santa Fe was already a flourishing capital. These early explorers penetrated the Southwest with an all consuming spirit of conquest in matters material, political and religious. It was to their descendants, and to the transients of business and pleasure, streaming across the desert like an ant trail from west to east and east to west, in 1849, that Hiram Reed, in the market place of the Santa Fe Plaza, preached the first evangelical New Testament Gospel message, in accordance with Baptist faith, practice and principles.

Approximately another one hundred years rolled by like a recording tape on the march of human affairs before this spark: The doctrine of personal approach to the throne of grace, individual regeneration, personal endowment of spiritual power, and complete expression of religious liberty was fanned into an effective flame, sweeping onward across the sun-kist valley of Arizona, to the Gold Coast of California, up to the snow capped mountains of Washington, and echoing eastward to the Atlantic coast.

### BIRTH PLACE OF A-BOMB

It is also very significant that, in the wisdom of God, in directing the scientific developments so seriously affecting the human relationships of this universe, permitted the first atomic explosion to be conducted in the shadows of this ancient civilization, thus welding into one, the oldest and the newest of American heritage in the hottest and brightest flash of all man made history. This brilliance was exceeded only by that light from Heaven that arrested Saul of Tarsus on the road to Damascus and transformed the persecutor into a preacher. The far reaching influences of these transactions have caused the spotlight of the world to be focused on industry, politics, military prowess, and religion, in our beloved America. God uses man in his management of human relationships.

### GOD'S MEASURE OF A MAN

In the light of this glorious gospel and its conquering power, let us consider some of the principles involved in the **measure** of a man. The **measure** of a man determines the course of destiny among the masses. Civilizations hang in the balance today, waiting for a man who can **measure** up to the needs of this hour.

In Proverbs 16:11 we have these words: "A just weight and balance are the Lord's. All the weights of the bag are His work." Duet. 25: 13-15: "Thou shalt not have in thine bag divers weights, a great and a small. But thou shalt have a perfect and just weight, a perfect and just measure shalt thou have: 'that thy days may be lengthened in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee'."

In Ephesians 4:7, 13-16 we have grace given by the measure of the gift of Christ, and the appeal to measure up to the fullness of the stature of Christ.

From our scripture references we have sought to set forth the Bible principle that all **just** weights and all **just** measures are the Lord's. No human intelligence, or wisdom, is sufficient to deal justly, honestly, and sympathetically with a fellow man. All of the attributes of kindness, consideration, sympathetic appreciation, truth, honesty, integrity and righteousness, must come from God the creator and preserver of this universe. Therefore, the only hope for peace, prosperity and brotherly consideration among the peoples of this world is in accepting God's plan and standard in the **measure** of a man.

### MAN'S STANDARDS

The Government of our own United States of America, exercises thereby the authority over its citizens in setting up the standards of protection and equitable considerations of exchange in relationships to one another. The food and drug act sets limitations of quality and measurement. Weights and measures of commodities are established. The value and exchange in money rations are fixed. The time pieces of the nation must be corrected to the one standard from Washington. The musical instruments of the nation must conform to that standard tone to establish the pitch.

A contract was recently let at White Sands Proving Ground for several miles of track for the sled piloted by the son of one of our Foreign Missionary couples, Col. Stapp, at the highest rate of ground speed ever achieved by man. The exact precision of these rails demands that the work be done at night, because of temperature effects, and the finished product must not vary more than twice the thickness of a human hair.

A modern jet bomber has 14,698 rivets in one wing, each of which must fit within fifteen ten thousandths of an inch. Even a small scuff on a wing surface will reduce the speed twenty miles an hour.

If such precision is required by man in his experiments for progress, how much more has God in his authority and ownership, the right to expect of us a keener perception of precision in things Spiritual.

Mr. Webster defines **measure** as "The extent of a thing, the length, breadth, thickness, circumference, or capacity. It means to value, or as in combat with swords, it means the reach of the one engaged." Shall we consider this in connection with the **measure of a man**, as to his **value**, as to his **capacity**, and as to his **reach**. What measure do we find according to a man?

Life seems to be one serious crisis after another, and the measure of a man is determined by his ability, to readjust, refocus, rearrange, re-evaluate and re-engage in the better conquest. The measure of a man in his attitude towards his fellow man may be expressed by the nature of his activities. He may trade or just tirade. He may transport or just import or deport. He may transfigure, or he may trample. It all depends upon the source of his standards of **measure**, his recognition and conviction concerning them.

## Preached in Kansas City, May 30, 1956, By Harry P. Stagg, Executive Secretary, New Mexico Baptist Convention

### MAN'S WEAKNESS AGAINST EVIL

A man may be **measured** in his attitude towards evil. Some seem to feel the need of indulgence in evil to understand it. We do not need to experience evil to understand its damaging effects. Jesus did not. We cannot show just indifference toward evil, we must openly oppose it.

King Saul said, "I have played the fool," when he disobeyed God and kept back the spoils which he had been commanded to destroy. We cannot fool God. We find out the truth of the statement "to obey is better than sacrifice." He seemed sorry only that he got caught. Our prisons are full of sad spectacles of humanity who must, by force, be separated from society for its own protection. Man cannot set his will against the will of God, or against the will of society, or against the will of the authority of his own established government, and not pay the serious penalty involved therein.

Moses has been recognized as the meekest man, Solomon was the wisest man, and Samson by far the strongest man, who ever lived. Even though he had strength to lift the gates from the city and carry them single handed to the top of the hill, or to meet a lion and to tear him apart with his bare hands, or to take the jaw bone of a donkey and slay the enemy, yet he did not have the moral fibre to withstand the temptations of three beautiful and fascinating females. After breaking his vow to God and man, and reposing, in his final relaxation, his head in the lap of a Delilah, at the shout of the Philistines, he arose to measure himself as heretofore, but knew not that the Spirit of the Lord had been removed from him.

Man, by his own moral measures **refrains not** from adultery, drunkenness, gambling and debauchery. Man, by his own ethical measure is incompetent to the true, the right, the fair, the honest dealings. Man, by his own spiritual measure is entirely inadequate for the conquests and demands that can only be met by Superhuman, Spiritual forces. Human systems, based on moral, ethical or spiritual measures, are ineffective weapons in combat with spiritual wickedness in higher places and the personal ability or a spiritual Satan.

### RELIGIOUS CONVICTIONS CONTROL

Man's conduct is not determined by the type or amount of his information, or his intellectual ability, but by his affection, by his spiritual affinities. We do that which we **want** to do most, not that which we **know** to be right. Therefore, our religious convictions control our conduct to the extent of our devotion thereto. Religion really determines the food we eat and the manner in which it is prepared; the kind of dress we wear, the style as well as the material; the dwelling in which we live, the architecture as well as the **substance**.

Governments are controlled by religion. This is expressed mainly in two directions. First, by absolute control, wherein an organized religion, by force, completely dominates the government and is sustained by the financial support therefrom. The second is an indirect method which is assumed voluntarily and is expressed only through the spiritual inner convictions of the individuals who make up the citizenship and governmental agencies. Their sense of devotion and responsibility is measured by their religious conscience in their choices. The cherished principle of religious liberty and separation of church and government can only be fully expressed through the complete dedication of the individual in authority or command, to the spirit of the New Testament Christianity.

The measure of man has always been seeking to integrate religions. The children of Israel failed to keep their possession of the Holy Land, because they introduced the false religions round about them. This came mainly under Solomon's rule as he sought to establish world alliances by marrying the princesses of the leading nations then involved, each one of whom brought their own idolatrous worship into the Holy City.

Religions have claimed unlimited devotions and sacrifices from their seekers. Mighty temples have been erected to the living and to the dead, expressing the utmost in architectural strength, beauty and costliness, to the utmost of man's measure in conception and contribution, and yet

with all of this expenditure of toil and treasure, religions have not been sufficient to answer the continuous cry, "Show us the Father and it Sufficeth us." John 14:8. The altars and inscriptions to many gods persists even to our day, very little change from the hour that Paul proclaimed the gospel on Mars Hill of ancient Athens.

### CHALLENGE OF ATOMIC AGE

Through the centuries various tribes have been more or less isolated from the rest of the world. They have been able to largely maintain and to protect their own traditions, customs mannerisms and worship. The small trickle of missionaries from other nations and other religions have really disturbed them very little, but now we face a new day.

The peoples of this world, every tribe and tongue, color, race and creed, are being hurled with supersonic speed into the atomic age. Fantastic and unbelievable miracles are being wrought among us hourly. Planes without wings are being flown, the sun is being used for refrigeration, and gasoline can be made from water. Truly we know not what a day may bring forth.

Among the many changes which are inevitable, is the mixing and mingling of the people of this globe. No longer is it possible to protect your tribe with its traditions and customs and peculiar religious rituals. The supreme test is upon us, but what religion can measure up to this atomic atmosphere, attitude and attainment? Is the world spiritually prepared to accept these miracles and revolutionize living standards, or will they be rejected and thus doom suffering humanity to another dark sentence?

The attempt to integrate religions brought destruction around the golden calf under the leadership of Aaron, even while Moses was in the mountain top to receive the commandments of the true God. "In time past at this ignorance God winked, but now commandeth all men to repent, and in times past he suffered the nations to walk in their own ways. Now he calls all to repentance until we all come into unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the **measure** of the **stature** of the fullness of Christ."

### AMERICA MUST TURN TO CHRIST

America may be able to assimilate in a democratic political freedom the various races, colors, languages, customs and traditions, but America can never survive the integration of the various religions of the world. The compromise of doctrinal convictions will neutralize the operational functions. Religions based upon human systems, no matter how wise, moral, ethical, or beautiful in their search for purity, cannot procreate eternal life. Jesus said, "I am the Resurrection and the Life. I give unto them eternal life. I am come that they might have life."

The religion that serves the atomic age of tomorrow must be virile, able to produce and reproduce. It must be Supernatural, Superhuman and Spiritual. It must be concerned with John 17, "Father the hour is come, glorify Thy Son that Thy Son also may glorify Thee, as Thou hast given him power over all flesh that he should give eternal life to as many as Thou hast given him, and **this is life eternal, that they might know Thee, the only true God and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent.**"

In the study of Romans, 1st chapter, 1st Cor., 10th chapter, we find that from the Bible point of view religions do not bring people in touch with God, though they do reveal the universal feeling of all mankind for the need of worship. Man in sin is evil and cannot be made better or improved. He must be created anew completely. In our natural measure we not only do sinful things but love to do them. We become adherents to religions but we experience Christianity.

Those who are consecrated to false systems of worship do not consider their need to be saved from religion. Other religions have palliatives for distress brought on by sin, but do not produce conscious need as does Christianity. They are not conscious of the need of Christ to comfort and save from sin. But when Christ and the cross are presented, great disturbance follows. That is why all other religions

(Continued to page 10)



W. W. Swain (left above) stands by the pulpit he made for the San Jon Baptist Church, flanked by Pastor John Chandler. The scene is in the church's new auditorium, recently completed. Part of an oil painting can be seen in the background. The painting, hanging over the baptistry, was done by Mrs. E. E. Hendricks, a member of the church.

Brother Swain, who recently passed his 90th birthday, formerly worked at the carpentry trade and has been an active member of the church for several years.

Pastor Chandler reports that the new auditorium, of cinder block construction, will seat more than 200. It measures 40 by 71 ft. He said the old building will be converted into use as an educational unit.

#### CONVENTION SERMON —

(Continued from page 7)

attempt to throw up a shield of protection for their people against the introduction of Christianity. Many are moral and religious but not Christian.

#### CHRIST'S NEW MEASURE FOR MAN

When Jesus came the world was divided into four main types: the moral type, expressed by the Jew; the intellectual type, expressed by the Phoenicians. Jesus could not be placed in any type. He introduced a new form of life and a new Measure for man in his relationships to God and his fellowman. Christianity is the only religion that gives back more than it exacts from its followers. Christianity is the only productive religion. War, famine, and pestilence are caused by religion. The starving multitudes in slavery today are there because of religion. Christianity, only, produces all that people need. Seek you first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things, food, clothing, shelter, and necessary support will be added. The greatest demonstration in the history of the world has been made in America. Our major problem is a surplus of goods.

It is significant that the new nation of Israel has been established mainly upon the strength, spirit and financial assistance produced under the influence of the Christian faith in America. Christianity not only is the only religion that produces sufficient goods to divide with others around the world but is the only religion that would produce the spirit to share that produce after it is accumulated.

Religion without a divine Saviour is incompetent. 1st Cor. 1:24 states, "Christ, the power of God." Human systems are doomed unless they measure up to His standards. Jesus said, "At least believe me for the works sake." In Christianity we have a Person, not just a program. We have the Divine, not just the human. We have the Spiritual, not just the moral and ethical. We have the Supernatural and not just the natural. Faith in Christ is the process, and character of the individual is the product. Man sins against God most in his religion. People desire religion to condone what they want to do.

#### WE MUST LIVE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

Christianity demands that we give up self and obey God. We have a revelation but we need a demonstration. We have preached Christ, exalted him, worshipped him, and 'Crowned him Lord of All' in music, but we yet have

to-live the sermon on the mount. Someone has said that man has learned how to fly in the air like a bird and learned how to swim in the ocean like a fish, but has never been able to walk on earth like a man.

To live the way Jesus lived is the only thing that can change this world. A declaration of faith is not sufficient. To find the measure of the fullness of the stature of Christ is to "follow me." Our weakness is not in the lack of understanding but in the lack of courage to execute the commands of Christ. Does Christianity cost more than government, or war, or famine? He must have had complete hope in his followers when he said, "All ye shall receive power, and greater things than these shall ye do, because I go to my Father. Ye are the salt of the earth." The measure of a man can only be complete when he is connected with the measure of God and is willing to yield himself in the spirit of 2nd Cor. 4:5. "And ourselves, your servants for Jesus sake."

The measure of God has no limits. He made the world and all things therein, he holds the destiny of man and of the universe in His hand. He made the weights for the wind and measured the waters. He sets the measure for the rain and the harvest. The stars and the planets of heaven obey His will to exact precision. Only man, of all His creation, has not chosen to follow in complete obedience. God's love knows no measure in meeting human sin because "He so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life."

God's love knows no measure in meeting human needs. Jesus went about doing good. He healed the sick, opened the eyes of the blind, caused the dumb to speak, the deaf to hear, fed the hungry and raised the dead. He wept with Mary and Martha, and His heart was deeply touched when the rich young ruler turned away.

The sermon on the mount does not abrogate the ten commandments, but offers inspiration, courage and power to execute the spirit thereof. The measure of a man with God would place the love of God first. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and all thy mind, and thy neighbor as thyself. Thou shalt have no other Gods before me, thou shalt not make unto thee any image or any likeness of anything in heaven above or in earth beneath, or that is in the water underneath the earth, nor bow down thyself to them, nor serve them."

#### ARE YOU CHRISTIAN? HERE'S TEST

After the establishment of the supreme love of God the Father through faith in His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, and our appreciation of the office work of the Holy Spirit to convict the world of sin, righteousness and judgment, the measure of a man would reach out to the consideration of his brethren. By this we know that we have passed from death unto life, if we love one another. The sermon on the mount and the measure of a Man with God would have you go beyond these principles, even to love for your enemies. Matthew 5:44, "But I say unto you, love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven." As a supreme test of manhood, in battle or in crisis, will separate the men from the boys, so likewise this passage of scripture "love your enemies," separates the Christians from the non-Christians. The application of this philosophy would quickly clear our world situation.

#### CHRIST, A 'MUST' OF OUR GENERATION

In man's measure with God love never faileth. In the 17th chapter of John, Jesus prayed that to His followers might be imparted that love wherewith the Father loved Him before the foundation of the world and that the unity of that love being one with Him might convince the world that God had sent him to bring the message of eternal life and "That the world may know that thou hast sent me and has loved them as thou hast loved me."

My dearly beloved, this, according to the measure of a man, redeemed from sin by the blood of Christ, empowered by the Holy Spirit of God, a loving expression of supreme love of God to mankind, is the hope of the world. Potential tragedy is imminent. The urgency of the hour cannot be overly emphasized. Christ is a must of this generation.