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ACTIONS IN ACTS

A series of short sermons delivered over
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on Sunday afternoons, May 5, 1946, to July 28, 1946,
by W. CARL KETCHERSIDE

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Dear friends of the gospel:

The lessons contained in this book are exactly as delivered on "The CHURCH OF CHRIST Hour" over Station WTMV, at Saint Louis. They were prepared for one purpose only and that to tell men and women what to do to be saved. We are happy that we may be able to share them with you through the medium of the printed page, and send them forth with the humble prayer that they may accomplish good for the Cause of Him who died that we might live.

The Churches of Christ are non-sectarian and nondenominational. They are neither Protestant or Catholic and existed before either of those faiths. They are not a reformation of anything, but represent simply the church of the New Testament, carrying on the work and worship as commanded by the Lord. We invite you to become acquainted with the plea which we make for unity of the Spirit, based upon God's Word. May the sermons herein contained help you to become more familiar with the teachings of that Word is my firm desire.

Yours for Truth,

W. Carl Ketcherside.

THE BIRTH OF A NATION

The Church of Christ was the first church. It was established by Christ through the apostles. It was established fifty days after the resurrection of the Son of God from the grave. It was established in Jerusalem. These facts will not be denied by any capable Bible student. They cannot be refuted by any enemy of the truth. The holy scriptures substantiate every one of them.

Before Jesus was killed He said to Simon Peter, "Upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" (Matthew 16:18, 19). If anything in the world is plain, it is certainly plain from this statement that Jesus Christ was going to build a church, and that the church He erected would be His. It would, in other words, be the Church of Christ. Further, it was to be built during the lifetime of Simon Peter, for he was told that when given the keys of the kingdom, he was to bind and loose on earth. The church was to be set up while Peter was still on earth. And it was to be the kingdom of heaven.

When Jesus made this solemn announcement, the apostles could not yet conceive of the magnitude of the promise. They were Jews. They were narrow in their concepts. They still believed that Jesus was going to overhaul and overthrow the Roman government and restore Palestine and the kingdom to Israel as it was in the days of David and Solomon. They were looking, as some still look, for an earthly rule of Jesus at Jerusalem. But they were mistaken in all that He said. Even after He arose from the dead and appeared unto them for forty days, speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom, they said unto Him, "Lord, wilt Thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" (Acts 1:6).

The answer was plain. "It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in His own power. 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" (Acts 1:7, 8). The apostles were to remain at Jerusalem until they received this power. Jesus said, "And, behold, I send the promise of My Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high" (Luke 24:49).

Why did they need to remain in Jerusalem? The answer is because that was the city where God had decreed His church would be established, and truth would begin to be preached in its fulness. Listen to the prophet Isaiah, who spoke hundreds of years before the event. "And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and He will teach us His ways, and we will walk in His paths; for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem" (Isaiah 2:2, 3).

But you may argue that this merely says the "house of God" was to be established in Jerusalem. It says nothing about the church. In reply I affirm that the house of God is the church. Let me quote, "These things write I unto thee, hoping to come unto thee shortly. But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth" (1 Timothy 3:15). Now, Isaiah says the house of God was to be established, and the word to go forth from Jerusalem. Paul says that the house of God is the church of God. Therefore the church of the New Testament was established at Jerusalem.

It was there the gospel had its beginning. I read again the words of the Lord Jesus, "Then opened He their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures, and said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem" (Luke 24:45-47). The only reason that the disciples did not know this previously was because their under-

standing was not opened. They were ignorant. They didn't understand the scriptures. And that same thing must explain why so many have not yet grasped these facts today.

Let us briefly recapitulate. Isaiah predicted that God's house, the church, would be established at Jerusalem. Christ said that the gospel should begin to be preached at that place. He told the apostles they would receive power to witness this among all nations. He told them this power would be received after the Holy Ghost came upon them. He told them to remain in Jerusalem until they received this power from on high. All of that is plain.

Now, let us read again. "And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance" (Acts 2:1-4). Here's the Holy Spirit upon these men. Now they have received power to witness to all nations. But is this place where they were assembled at Jerusalem? The next verse says, "And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven" (Acts 1:5).

Peter as the chief spokesman stands up to answer the honest questions and the dishonest jibes of the multitude which gathers. He preaches the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ for the first time in fact, rather than promise or prediction. It strikes home to the people. As he reaches his conclusion, we are told, "Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Listen to the answer as given by the Holy Spirit. "Then Peter said unto them, Repent and be baptized everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost" (Acts 2:38). Did they do that? Let's continue. "Then they that gladly received His word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls" (Acts 2:41). Unto what, then, were they added? Listen once more. "And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved" (Acts 2:47). Then the

church had its beginning as God had taught. It was now in existence and men and women were capable of being added to it.

The Church of Christ was established upon the first Pentecost after the resurrection of Christ. It was established when the Holy Spirit fell upon the apostles and enabled them to announce the terms of salvation unto all nations. This was the beginning. Three and a half years later, Peter was called upon to announce these same identical terms to the Gentiles, and admit them to the kingdom. He said of that occasion, "And as I began to speak, the Holy Ghost fell on them, as on us *at the beginning*" (Acts 11:15). The inspired apostle dates the beginning of the church from the events recorded in the second chapter of the book of Acts.

You may ask how it happens that the church was established in one day and was not a gradual affair? I reply that it had to be established on that day, the terms of admission had to be announced, and men and women had to be born into the family of God. Otherwise one of God's prophecies would have failed. It was predicted by Isaiah, who said, "Who hath heard such a thing? who hath seen such things? Shall the earth be made to bring forth in one day? or shall a nation be born at once? for as soon as Zion travailed she brought forth children" (Isaiah 66:8). The church was established as the bride of Christ. And just as Eve, the bride of Adam, was made capable of reproducing the human family at once, so the church was made capable of bearing children to Christ immediately.

We are only interested in the New Testament church. We are not concerned with or about any church not mentioned by name in the Bible. Salvation lies in the church which Christ calls his. It was established at the proper time and the proper place, by the proper ones for the proper purpose. If you belong to a church established anywhere else except at Jerusalem, it is not the church of the Bible. Or, if you belong to one established any time before or after the day of Pentecost, it is not the Church of Christ. If you belong to one established by anyone except Christ or the apostles, or in which salvation is not located, you are a member of a body foreign to God's Word and His promises. Why not be on the safe side? Why not become a member of the New Testament church? Why not be sure that you are pleasing God, and have the hope of heaven after death?

OPENING THE DOOR

The Church of Christ is God's house. This house is large enough to accommodate all of the members of God's family. But one does not enter this family by means of physical birth. In order to become a member thereof, it is necessary to be born again. Jesus said to Nicodemus, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3). The ruler of the Jews who had come to Jesus by night could not grasp this spiritual truth. He looked at it from a literal standpoint. "Nicodemus saith unto Him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born? Jesus answered, Verily, verily I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God" (John 3:5). This proves that men are out of the kingdom of God, even when they are old, unless they have been born again. The new birth is the door of the kingdom. Whatever a man must do to get into the church or kingdom is a part of the new birth.

Christ could not remain on earth until the church was set up. He had to be exalted to the right hand of God, and sit upon the heavenly throne. So the work of setting up the kingdom was given into the hands of the apostles. They were to introduce the gospel to humanity, and open the way for men into the grace of God. They were, by divine injunction, to turn the key and open the lock and admit men to the church of Christ.

Jesus said to Peter, "Upon this rock I will build My church, and I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 16:18, 19). We would therefore expect Peter to tell men what to do in order to enter the New Testament church. We should not make the same mistake as Nicodemus and think that the keys were literal. The church is a spiritual institution, and the keys were the same. The word "key" signifies authority. Thus Jesus gave unto the apostles the authority to open the way into the kingdom of heaven. He had a perfect right to do that, for after His resurrection He declared, "All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth" (Matthew 28:18).

There is just one church which Jesus established. He said, "Upon this rock I will build My church"—not churches! Paul says, "There is one body" (Ephesians 4:4), and he further says

of Christ, "And He is the head of the body, the church" (Colossians 1:18). Since there is one body, and that one body is the church, then God has built but one house. It has but one door to it. It makes no difference in what age you live, what your nationality may be, if you get into God's house, you must come through that door. If you have not come through that door, you are not yet in His house. You may be sincere, honest and earnest, but that does not change the truth. You are either in the house of God or out of it. And you are most certainly out of it until you enter the door that leads into it.

What is that door? Let's go to the day of Pentecost, when the church was set up on earth. Let us see what Peter did with the keys of the kingdom. If we can find out what he told people to do to enter that house on that day, we will know what we must do to enter that same house on this day. The door is just the same. When the multitude heard the gospel on the day the church was established, "they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?" (Acts 2:37).

Did Peter tell them? If so, did he tell them the truth? Remember that Peter was filled with the Holy Ghost. What he told those people to do was exactly what the Spirit of God wanted them to do. Did he tell them something that was non-essential? Did he mislead them? If not, then, mind you, the things he told them to do, we must all do. If we refuse to do them, we rebel against the Spirit. Suppose you had been present on that memorable occasion? Suppose you had been touched to the depth of your conscience, and had asked what to do? Would you have obeyed what Peter told you? Would you have accepted it? If so, why do you not accept it now? Is it any less the truth today than it was then? If Peter were here this afternoon, and you asked him that same question, would he not give you the same answer? If he would, then do I dare give you any other? What did he tell those people they must do?

Listen, now! "Then Peter said unto them, *Repent and be baptized* everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins." There it is! Those are the words of an inspired apostle. That's what it takes to enter the church for which Jesus died. Get your Bible and read it yourself. You'll find it in Acts,

chapter two, verse thirty-eight. Now, friends, if that is the door of obedience, and there's only one door, then you who have not done this are still outside.

Why did Peter not tell them to fall down and pray? Why did he not invite them to a mourner's bench? Why did he not tell them to get down by their seats and implore God to save them? I'll tell you why. It was because he was preaching what the Holy Spirit inspired him to preach. But you say that you do not believe those things are essential. They are still there! You tell me you know that you were saved before you ever obeyed one of those commands. I merely call attention to the words of scripture, "He that saith, I know Him, and keepeth not His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him" (1 John 2:4). So it is you and God for it!

When Jesus announced His universal sovereignty, He said to the Apostles, "All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world" (Matthew 28:19, 20). Notice that they were to teach all nations, baptizing them. All who are properly taught will be baptized. If one is not baptized it is either because he has not been properly taught, or else refuses to do what the Master commands. All we can do is to teach. Those who gladly receive His word will be baptized (Acts 2:41).

The reason Peter told the people on the day of Pentecost to repent and be baptized was because the words of the crucified Lord and risen Redeemer were still ringing in his ears. I read, "And He said unto them, go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark 16:15, 16). These are the words of Jesus. "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." Do you accept them? Have you obeyed them? You may say that you can know the Lord just as well without being baptized. But the Bible says, "Hereby we know that we do know Him, if we keep His commandments" (1 John 2:3).

There is an idea extant today that one cannot do anything in

regard to the scheme of redemption. But the people on the day of Pentecost asked the question, "What must we do?" They didn't ask what they must feel, what they must experience or what they must witness. They asked, "What shall we do?" If they couldn't do anything, why didn't Peter tell them so? He heard their question, and he answered it. He told them something to do, and whatever he informed them to do, he likewise informs you to do. To my many friends in the world who have not accepted Christ, but who are convicted in conscience and ask what you must do, I simply say, "Repent and be baptized everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins." That's the door to the church. That's the way into the One Body! Have you entered that door yet?

All the laughing, all the scoffing, all the ridicule on earth cannot remove that from the Word of God. You may scorn the idea of being baptized, but when you do, you reject the Word of heaven's truth. And that verse will judge you in the last day. Just last week I heard of a woman who said that if she was shown a certain passage in the Bible, she would tear the page out, because she didn't believe it. Poor benighted, ignorant soul! Did she think that she could tear out one of God's laws and not have to face it? When the books are opened in the last day and you are judged out of the things that are written therein, you will find the statement, "Repent and be baptized everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins." You may deny it now, but you will face it then! You may talk around it here, but you will be speechless in that great day!

I want you to hear as I read Luke 7:30, "But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptized of him" (Luke 7:30). The "him" mentioned here is John the Baptist. If those in his day who were not baptized, rejected the counsel of God, is it not true that those who today refuse to be baptized at the command of God, refuse God's counsel? I implore you this day to do as God wills. His word is true. It is sacred and solemn. Obey it. "Repent and be baptized everyone of you!"

THE TEST OF FAITH

The church is composed of men and women of faith. Those who do not believe have no part or lot in this sacred, blood-bought institution. "Without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him" (Hebrews 11:6). In view of this fact, it is not at all surprising that God ordained a test for the faith and humility of those who desire to become members of the New Testament church. Throughout the ages, God has tested the faith of all who profess to love Him. And in every instance the test has been a command to do something which transcends human reason, and is obeyed purely and simply because God has commanded it.

If God had told us to live a good moral life in order to be pleasing unto Him and gain entrance to the church, this would not have been a test of our faith in Him as God. For even an infidel can reason that an immoral life will bring retribution, and that it pays to abstain from fornication and drunkenness. Such abstinence cannot be taken as an indication of faith in God at all, for people who never heard of the true God have developed an obsession against these things. To be a true test of one's faith, a command must be such that one cannot see a connection between the act and the result to be achieved.

When God tested the faith of Israel at Jericho, He instructed them to march around the city wall thirteen times and then blow a blast upon their trumpets. No one could see any connection between these acts and the overthrow of the city, but when they did what God commanded, the city walls fell down. In the case of Gideon, God instructed him to take three hundred men, and equip them with earthen vessels containing lights, as well as a trumpet for each, and go forth against the Midianites. No one could see the connection between such a command and the victory over the enemy; nevertheless, when they obeyed they gained that victory. If they could have seen the reason in it they would have obeyed purely because it appeared reasonable and not because of faith in God.

In the case of the sinner, the act of baptism is set up as a test of his faith. On the day of Pentecost, when the listening multi-

tude cried out to the apostles, "What shall we do?" the answer came back, "Repent and be baptized everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins." Now, a lot of people cannot see how God is going to remit their sins in baptism, so they refuse to be immersed in water. Remember that *baptism* is your part, but the *remission* is God's part. It is none of your concern how God carries out His part; all you have to worry about is doing what He has told you.

Suppose the Israelites had refused to march around Jericho, and offered as their excuse that they did not see how God could overthrow the walls by that manner. Suppose that Gideon had refused to surround the camp of Midianites because he could not see how God would overcome them with earthen pitchers, lamps and trumpets. Would they have gained the victory either time? Certainly not! But they didn't ask God how He was going to do what He promised. They merely did what they were commanded to do. The command to us is plain, "Repent and be baptized!" You can understand that. You can do it! If you believe in God you will do it. The only reason that men and women are not baptized into Christ is because they do not believe. If you have not been baptized into Christ; if you have not been immersed in water upon a confession of your faith in Christ as the Son of God, you have not yet passed the test.

I want to prove that. Listen now as I read with you Acts 2:41, "Then they that gladly received His word were baptized." If they that gladly receive His word are baptized, then it stands to reason that those who have not been baptized have not gladly received His word. The way by which you show that you have gladly received the word of God is by obeying this command. Suppose those people who heard the command had said, "How is God going to remit our sins by any such method?" Would they have gladly received His word? Then, what about you who say the same things this day? Have you received the word of the Lord as long as you refuse to do one of the first things He has commanded you?

There is not a case in the book of Acts of anyone who refused to be baptized, upon gladly receiving the word of the Lord. As a matter-of-fact, a man couldn't gladly receive the word of the Lord and make such a refusal because that is a part of the word

of the Lord. There's no getting around it. There can be no argument against it. It's there! It's in the Bible! You can read, if you will, for yourself.

In Acts 8:5, it says, "Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them." Verse 8 says, "And there was great joy in that city." Verse 12 says, "But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women." In the face of this, why have not a great many of you men and women who listen today been baptized? Is it not because you have never heard Christ preached, or if you have, because you have not believed the preaching concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ? It is evident that, if those who believe these things, are baptized, then those who are not baptized have not yet believed these things. Isn't that logical?

In Acts 8:35, after Philip had been invited by the Secretary of the Treasury, for the Queen of Ethiopia, to ride with him, and explain some Biblical passages he was reading, the Bible says, "Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus." The next verse continues, "And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?" What made that man want to be baptized? Was it not that he had heard Jesus preached unto him? Have you heard Jesus preached? Has it had the same effect on you as on that man? If not, what is the reason? I'll tell you. It is because you do not believe. I know the Ethiopian believed, because I read in verse 37, "And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." Now, let's see what happened, "And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch: and he baptized him." There's a man who passed the test! There's one who gladly received the word of the Lord. If it took that to demonstrate his faith, how can you show yours except by the same obedience? Is God a respecter of persons?

Take the case of Saul of Tarsus, hater of the church and persecutor of Christians. When he saw Christ on the way to Damascus, he asked what he should do. He was told to go into the city and it would be told him what he must do. In a blinded condi-

tion, for three days, he awaited instructions. A disciple by the name of Ananias was sent to tell him what to do. When he came in and spoke to Paul, he said, "And now why tarriest thou? arise and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord" (Acts 22:16). Let's see what happened. "And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales, and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized" (Acts 9:18). He didn't argue about it; he didn't say it was non-essential; he just did it. And that's the thing to do with God's commands! OBEY THEM!

When Paul and Silas spoke to the women at the river's brink just outside the city of Philippi, there was a business woman from Thyatira present. Being devout, she listened to the words of these gospel preachers, and her heart was opened that she attended unto the things spoken by Paul. Let us read. "And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought us saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there" (Acts 16:15). If Paul were preaching today, and you heard his words, would you attend unto them? Would you be baptized? Well, his words are recorded for you in the Bible. Why not do what you are commanded? Why not be baptized and start the Christian life?

When Paul and Silas were in jail, and the earthquake came, and the jailer was rescued from suicide, after he thought the prisoners had all escaped, he asked, "What must I do to be saved?" Paul and Silas told him to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and he would be saved. I read, "And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes: and was baptized, he and all his, straightway" (Acts 16:32, 33). He passed the test of faith! He showed that he believed by doing what God told him to do. If someone has told you to do something else it isn't the will of God. Study your Bible. Don't take a chance with your soul. I plead with you who hear this day to be baptized in obedience to the command and in accord with the example of our Lord and Saviour.

CONTINUAL WORSHIP

In our investigation of the New Testament church, there is a refreshing note found in Acts 2:42. You'll recall that we found the terms of admission set forth in Acts 2:38, which gave the command, "Repent and be baptized everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins." Then we found the sincere acceptance of those terms by the honest hearers in verse 41, which is as follows, "Then they that gladly received His word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls." Now, that's the place where a lot of people stop. They accept the initial terms, they are baptized, but they never go on from there.

That's why I like the following verse. It starts out by saying, "And they continued." They didn't cease their work for the Lord merely at the waters of baptism. They knew that other things were required of them. They had certain obligations as Christians which must be fulfilled. And just as they had accepted God's commands when they were alien sinners, and had started on the road to eternal life, they now continued. There are those within reach of this broadcast today who have been baptized. You rose from the watery grave to walk in newness of life. But now you never attend the services. You never contribute to the advancement of the Cause of the Master. Was there anything wrong with your original obedience? Not at all—but, you did not continue! The early church continued in their obedience.

But I like the next word also. It is the word "steadfastly" and it should be emphasized. The statement reads, "And they continued *steadfastly*." I have known some who affirmed that they were just as strong believers in the Lord as ever, but they didn't prove it by their works. Oh, it's true that when there was a big revival, and the spiritual zeal was at high tide, they were right on the front seats, and as ready to take part as anyone in the church. But when the "big-meeting" was over, as Paul said, "Sin revived, and they died." There was no steadfastness. The church must move along with smooth, even functioning, if it accomplishes its purpose on earth. It cannot go by fits and jumps. It depends upon those who are "steadfast" to keep it moving.

It is very essential that we find what things they were in which the early church so steadfastly continued. Remember that the

church of Christ today must be as it was when established. If it is not, then it cannot be the church of Christ. Jesus is the same yesterday, today and forever. And the church he established is a perfect institution. It must continue to function in the same manner as when it was established. It must be steadfast in the same acts of worship. If you belong to a church which claims to be a church of Christ but it is not continuing steadfastly in the same things as did the early church, then you have switched off the main track somewhere along the line, and you should get back on it, for no man can get to heaven by a sidetrack. The devil threw a switch on you when you weren't looking. Back up and get on the right track!

Let us read. "And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine." That's the first thing! The word "doctrine" always means "teaching" anywhere it is found in the New Testament. That doctrine in which the early church continued was the "apostles' doctrine." It has been set down in the New Testament. Are you continuing in it steadfastly? Or are you a member of an institution that has set up a separate creed, another confession of faith, a discipline or book of governing rules? If so, you have left the apostles' doctrine. Remember that if your creed contains more than the Bible, it contains too much; if it contains less than the Bible, it does not contain enough; if it's exactly the same as the Bible, you don't need it, for you have the Bible. The Church of Christ, being a divine institution, accepts no other creed than the one divinely given. To do so would make it depend upon human reasoning as a basis for its existence and service. All that we need to know is contained in the Holy Scriptures, insofar as work and worship are concerned.

The apostle Paul declares, "All scripture given by inspiration of God is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Timothy 3:16, 17). The apostles recorded their teaching, so that we might be able to continue therein and know how to act as Christians. I quote, "These things write I unto thee, hoping to come unto thee shortly, but if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth" (1 Timothy 3:14, 15). It is important to continue in this doctrine, for your salva-

tion depends upon it. Hear the apostle again, "Take heed unto thyself and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee" (1 Timothy 4:16). What about those who do not continue therein? Paul affirms, "If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness; he is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words . . . from such withdraw thyself" (1 Timothy 6:3-5).

The early church continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship. This also is obligatory upon us today! The greatest social and fraternal institution on earth is the church established by the Lord Jesus. In it, there is to be enjoyed a mutual pleasure which cannot be found anywhere else.

They also continued in the "breaking of bread." This means in the communion service, in memory of the death of the Lord. Let me read 1 Corinthians 10:16, "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?" Before Jesus left the earth, He gave the disciples a command to remember Him in this fashion. Hear the word of the Lord on this matter, "The Lord Jesus the same night in which He was betrayed took bread, and when He had given thanks, He brake it and said, Take, eat: this is my body which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of Me. After the same manner also He took the cup, saying, This cup is the New Testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of Me" (1 Corinthians 11:23-25).

When did the early church observe this charge? That they continued steadfastly in it, we are informed. But what did this entail? Did they observe it on Thursday night before Good Friday, on Easter or Christmas? Nothing is said of these days in the New Testament, as days of observance in the church. Did they continue in the breaking of bread quarterly, semi-annually or annually? Let us examine the record. I turn to Acts 20:7, and find, "And upon the first day of the week when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them." There you are! The early church met upon the first day of the week to commemorate the death of Jesus. There isn't a single command

or precedent in the Bible for the observing of Ash Wednesday, Good Friday, Easter, Christmas or Lent. But there is certainly a precedent for meeting upon the first day of the week for the communion service. In the early church, one Lord's Day was not above another, and Paul said to the church at Galatia, "Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years. I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labor in vain." Every season is a holy season to the Christian. Every first day of the week is sacred in memory of the Lord.

The early church continued steadfastly in prayer also. Too often, the church of today feels that it can tie Satan by human ingenuity. Men spend their time planning and scheming and devising new methods to build up the church. In many instances they neglect the only thing which can assure success and that is prayer to God. Paul says, "I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; for kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour, who will have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Timothy 2:1-4). The early church prayed as if everything depended upon God, and then went forth and labored as if all depended upon them. And the church grew and prospered. In 1 Thessalonians 5:25, there is a terrific appeal in a few words. It came from the heart of the writer. That short sentence is, "Brethren, pray for us!" That's my appeal to you this day. In behalf of the gospel, in behalf of our preaching, I exclaim, "Brethren, pray for us!"

Examine your worship! Examine your work! Read the record, "And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine, and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers" (Acts 2:42). These are the marks of the church of Christ. Are you a member of such a church? If not, become such before it is too late.

THE GOSPEL IN SAMARIA

Sometimes the church without realizing it appears to thwart God's purpose. The early church did this very thing. It was the will of Christ that the gospel should be taken to all nations. He

told his apostles to "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations" (Matthew 28:19). Mark records that He said, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel unto every creature" (Mark 16:15). Luke gives His words as follows, "Repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem" (Luke 24:47). But when the church began, and grew mightily, the members were not anxious to scatter abroad. Although they came from every nation under heaven, they were content to remain at Jerusalem, rather than to endure the hardships of mission work in other regions. With a church numbering about 5,000 men, it would be thought that this was a perfect setup. But it was not doing what God wished.

Therefore, he permitted persecution to arise. Men and women were haled into prison. Stephen was put to death by a mob. The Book says, "And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles" (Acts 8:1). Now the truth became something precious. The easy days were over. They had to defend the things which they believed. And we read, "Therefore they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word" (Acts 8:4). What would have been calamity under other circumstances became the brightest thing that could have happened.

Among those scattered abroad was Philip. He was one of the seven deacons appointed at Jerusalem to assist in caring for the temporal needs of the destitute. Now he begins evangelistic work. We read, "Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them" (Acts 8:5). Things were different in those days, for we read, "And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which were spoken by Philip" (verse 6). What a pity that in these days so many will not listen to the word of life! Too busy with affairs of this life, they turn their back upon God's truth and head onward to destruction. But in the city of Samaria, the preaching of Jesus aroused the populace, and without a dissenting voice they attended unto the things which were spoken. The gospel and Christian living brings joy and happiness to those who accept it. No wonder, then, that we read, "And there was great joy in that city" (Acts 8:8).

We are told that formerly these people had been misled by a sorcerer and that all of them, from the least to the greatest, had

heeded the teaching of this delusive character. Nevertheless we find, "But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women" (Acts 8:12). Now, that is very important, for it tells us exactly what people did in order to obey the gospel in those days. First, Philip preached unto them; second, they heard and heeded that preaching; third, they believed it; and, last, they were baptized. That is the divine order of our obedience: hearing, belief, baptism.

But there is another outstanding feature of this account. It tells us that they were baptized—both men and women. You'll note that nothing is said about infants being baptized. If such had been baptized, I feel sure that mention would be made of the fact. It was characteristic, when distinguishing the members of such groups, to mention children when any were present. When Jesus fed the multitude, it was said, and I quote, "And they that had eaten were about five thousand men, beside women and children" (Matthew 14:21). Again, when a similar miracle was performed, it was said, "And they that did eat were four thousand men, beside women and children" (Matthew 15:38). The fact that here "men and women" are specifically mentioned as being baptized, and children are not included is strong evidence that no children were in the group.

But I should like to go even further. I will freely state that the man does not live who can find a command, example or even a logical inference that children were baptized. Baptism is for the remission of sins. Children cannot be scripturally baptized at all, for they are not sinners. To have a child baptized, in view of the Bible teaching on the subject of baptism, would be to imply that one believed that child to be a sinner and therefore in danger of being lost if not baptized.

Little children are in a state of innocency. They are not accountable in the sight of God for their deeds. If they die in infancy they will go to heaven. They do not need to be baptized in order to become like adults; but adults need to be baptized to become like little children. When we arrive at the age of accountability, and can determine right from wrong, and thus are sinners in the sight of God, we must be baptized to wash away our sins. That makes us innocent once more, and we become like little chil-

dren. Let me read the words of Jesus, "Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 18:3). He said, "Suffer little children to come unto me and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven." The kingdom of heaven is made up of material like little children; that is, those who are humble, meek, trustful and obedient.

There are certain requirements one must meet before he is a subject of baptism. Jesus said, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved" (Mark 16:16). In order to believe, one must hear and understand the gospel. "Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God" (Romans 10:17). Now, little children cannot understand or believe the gospel; therefore, they are not scriptural subjects of baptism. Only those who can be taught, and believe the teaching, can be immersed in obedience to God's will.

Again, one must repent before he is a subject of baptism. We read in Acts 2:38, "Repent and be baptized everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins." Now, an infant cannot repent, because it has done nothing of which it should repent. It is not guilty of violating God's law and has made no infraction of that law. Since it cannot repent, it is not a subject of baptism. Infant baptism is either necessary or it isn't. If it is, then you should baptize all infants, regardless of whether they happen to be born into a family of believers or not. The poor little babies cannot choose whose family they will enter, and if baptism is essential for them to be saved, then those who are born into families of infidels will be lost if they die while helpless. But if it isn't necessary, then it is wrong to make a mockery out of a sacred ordinance by administering it to those who do not need it.

Before one can be baptized scripturally, that one has to confess his faith in Jesus Christ. When the Ethiopian heard the gospel as delivered by the inspired preacher Philip, he asked, "What doth hinder me to be baptized?" Then Philip answered, "If thou believeth with all thine heart thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God" (Acts 8:37). Thereupon, Philip baptized him. Romans 10:10 informs us, "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." But an infant cannot confess Christ, therefore is not a proper subject for baptism.

Every member of the church has a definite responsibility. God does not make a requirement of us that we are not able to fulfill. It is the duty of all in the church to tell the good news of salvation to others. The record informs us in the passage we read at the beginning, that all the church at Jerusalem was scattered abroad. It then says that they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word. Certainly there could be no infants in that congregation, for they would have been incapable of telling the story of the Cross to others. They would not have understood it themselves.

The church of Christ does not now, never has and never will imply that innocent little children are in need of baptism. But men and women are in need of it, if they have never been buried with the Saviour in that watery grave. If one of your sweet little children passes from this world before it is old enough to obey the gospel, rest assured that it will be transplanted from the rose garden of your home to the eternal fields of glory. Baptism is for sinners, for those who have not been saved. Children are safe! But you are not if you have reached the place in life where you are capable of making decisions. And as you listen to the gospel as it was preached by Philip in Samaria, I trust it will have the same effect upon you. Will you all with one accord give heed to these things? Will you believe the preaching of the gospel and be baptized? If you will, then there will be great joy in this city even as there was in ancient Samaria.

TWO LAWS OF PARDON

I want to talk with you today about God's two laws of pardon. That expression may seem rather strange to you. You may say that you did not even know that God had two laws of pardon. But the Bible clearly teaches that there are two laws laid down whereby man enters the grace of God. This must be, due to the fact that there are two classes of individuals who need pardon. One is the man who has never accepted Christ, that is the alien sinner; and the other is the one who, after being born into God's family, transgresses His will, the erring disciple.

Let us illustrate these laws in simple fashion. A man comes to the United States from France. After securing legal entry to the country, he desires to become a naturalized citizen thereof. The law has prescribed certain well-defined rules which he must obey. First, he must file a declaration of intention to become an American citizen. This must be done before the clerk of a court authorized to handle naturalization cases. After having lived in this country for five consecutive years, he then goes to the clerk of the court and signs and swears to his petition for naturalization. In this he announces that he is not opposed to organized government; that he firmly believes in the principles of our Constitution; and that he intends to give up all allegiance to the country from which he came. Two qualified witnesses must accompany him and affirm his residence for the stipulated time, as well as his good character. After at least thirty days, he must appear before a court, and if satisfactory proof of knowledge and intentions can be made, he is granted his papers which entitle him to all rights and privileges as a citizen.

Now, let us suppose that some time after this, the man decides to go back to France and visit certain of his relatives. He does so. Is it necessary for him to go through the same procedure in order to get back into this country? Indeed not! This time he must have his proper passport, and after having been duly examined by the customs agents, he once more enters the United States and takes up his residence. There is one law for the alien who has never become a citizen, and another for the one-time citizen who returns.

But let us suppose that when the man first desires to enter the country he is told that all he needs to do is to secure a passport, which he does. He enters this nation, secures a job and rears his family. Then the nation becomes involved in war, and all aliens are to be deported or banished. The man is secure in his mind, but when his papers are examined, it is found that he is not a citizen. In vain he protests that he did what he was told, but he is informed that the case was misrepresented. Now it is too late, and he is banished from the nation and all that he holds dear. You can see how important it is for one to know the law and be sure that he complies with the proper requirements.

Just so it is with the law of God. If one who is a citizen of

the kingdom of darkness decides to change his allegiance and become a member of the kingdom of God's dear Son, he must comply with the rules governing that desire. We've already learned that those rules were announced on the day that this kingdom began on earth. The inspired apostle told those who were alienated from God to "Repent and be baptized everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins." In repenting, one announces his allegiance will no more be with the things he formerly served, and in being baptized in water baptism he announces his desire to conform from this time forward with the laws governing the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ.

What about the man who believes and is baptized, but then goes back into the world and resumes his sinful practices? Must he be baptized again? Some are so foolish as to say that if baptism is for remission of sins, then one would have to be baptized every time he sins. That shows ignorance of God's law. That would be the equivalent of saying that if a man had to be naturalized the first time he came into this country, he would have to go through the same procedure every time he desired to enter. The first time he enters as an alien, but he never comes in that way again. Now, baptism is a naturalizing act. It is only for those who have never been in God's family before; it is not to be obeyed again, for one never again sins as an alien, but as a citizen.

Let's see what the law is for the man who has been baptized and then sins. We go again to the account of Philip's **PREACHING IN SAMARIA**. Present at the time was a man who certainly was an alien sinner and a former deceiver. I read, "But there was a certain man, called Simon, which beforetime in the same city used sorcery, and bewitched the people of Samaria, giving out that himself was some great one" (Acts 8:9). Now, let us continue, "Then Simon himself believed also, and when he was baptized, he continued with Philip, and wondered, beholding the miracles and signs which were done" (Acts 8:13). Thus we find that this sinner heard, believed and was baptized.

About this time the apostles came down from Jerusalem to confer the Holy Spirit upon those who had been baptized. Let us read, "And when Simon saw that through laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money, saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands,

he may receive the Holy Ghost" (verses 18, 19). What did Peter say to him for this sin, for certainly it was a sin to try and bribe the apostles to sell the right to the Holy Spirit? Did he tell Simon to "Repent and be baptized," as he told the people on Pentecost? Certainly not! That law was for aliens, not for naturalized citizens. Simon was a citizen of the kingdom. He had been baptized upon his belief in the preaching of Christ. True, he had departed from the faith, but what must he do to re-enter God's favor?

Listen! "But Peter said unto him, Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money. Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter: for thy heart is not right in the sight of God. Repent therefore of this thy wickedness and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee" (Acts 8:20-22). There it is! The alien is told to repent and be baptized; the erring citizen is told to repent and pray. These two laws are distinct. One cannot become a citizen by obeying the wrong one, neither can he re-enter by obeying the wrong one!

Now let me tell you of one of the most serious errors in the religious world today. There are thousands of preachers who through ignorance are telling alien sinners to do what erring disciples are commanded. They are trying to naturalize them by giving them the law to the erring citizens. And millions are being deceived. They think they are citizens when they are not. They go along in blissful ignorance, thinking that they are right with God when they have never been born into His family at all. They laugh at baptism and ridicule the idea of obedience, never realizing that it is a command of God, and that one of these days He is going to inspect their credentials and they will be banished forever from all that is good, because they refused to obey His law. They have been told that all they need to do is to kneel down penitently and pray to God, or come to an altar of prayer, or put their hand on the radio and pray. They believe that, and thus are led to neglect God's law. Oh, the sad awakening for some in the last day! Why do not these radio preachers who rant and rave so much quote the words as given on the day of Pentecost? Why not tell alien sinners to "Repent and be baptized?" That's what God tells them to do!

I want you to listen carefully to this statement. Never since the church was established upon this earth has the Holy Spirit

ever told a man who was not baptized to pray for forgiveness. I want you to get that! I challenge any preacher of any faith anywhere, anytime, to put his finger on one passage of scripture since the second chapter of Acts in which an alien sinner was ever told to pray to God, for forgiveness. It isn't there! Once there was a man who had not obeyed the gospel, and who was so full of remorse that he prayed. His name was Saul of Tarsus. But the Lord sent a man over to stop him from praying. That man, Ananias, came in and said, "And now, why tarriest thou? Arise and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord" (Acts 22:16). Instead of telling him to continue praying until he "got through," this faithful gospel preacher told him to quit, and get up and go be baptized. That's the will of God for those who have not been immersed. And just to make this really interesting, I will agree to meet in public discussion any recognized preacher of any faith who will deny that the New Testament teaches that immersion in water of a penitent believer is essential to remission of sins. Let's permit men and women to know what the Bible teaches.

If you have never obeyed the gospel, repent and be baptized; if you have obeyed it, then have drifted away from the truth and erred from God's will, repent and pray God for forgiveness. His will is simple. Obey it this day!

A SECRETARY OF THE TREASURY CONVERTED

The book of Acts of the Apostles is a book of conversions. It is a book which gives us examples of how men and women must come to Christ. While the exact principles may be laid down at other places in the New Testament, it remains for the book of Acts to show actual pictures of how those principles were applied. Today we are going to consider the conversion of a man of Ethiopia. He was an important figure in that mighty ancient nation. He had been appointed as secretary of the queen's treasury. And under Queen Candace, he was a man of great authority.

Apparently he was also a man of great integrity. He was reverential toward God as far as he had learned. This man drove his chariot hundreds of miles to get to Jerusalem in order to worship. But he did not know that he was wrong in that worship. Many people today make great sacrifices to go to church; they put forth much effort and expend much time, and yet they may be wrong, although very sincere. Such a man was the Ethiopian eunuch, whose story is recorded in the eighth chapter of Acts, in verses 26 to 40. At the time he is introduced unto us he has started his return journey toward Ethiopia.

The Lord was interested in this sincere man. So the angel of God appeared to a gospel preacher up at Samaria, and told that preacher, Philip, to arise and go down to the road which led from Jerusalem to Gaza; that is, the road which the queen's treasurer would be traveling. Philip immediately went. When he got to the junction of the Samaritan road with that one mentioned, along came a man in a chariot. As this man rode along, he was reading. Best of all, he was reading the Bible. A great many who ride on trains, planes and buses employ their time reading in these days. But the extent of their reading is generally such material as True Story Magazine, True Detective, or some other such unedifying gush and literary trash. But here was a man who read his Bible. He was reading from the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah, the wonderful prophetic account of the death of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Apparently the Ethiopian had learned that if you want a thing to be impressed on your mind, the best way is to read aloud, for he was reading aloud as he rode down the highway. Philip approached the man and asked him if he understood the things he was reading. The Ethiopian declared that he did not and asked Philip to ride along with him and make explanation of these matters. So Philip climbed into the chariot, and as they went along together, he spoke to him. The record says, "Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus" (Acts 8:35).

Now let's read the next verse. "And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?" What made him ask that? The Bible says nothing about Philip preaching bap-

tism. All he preached unto him was Jesus. Where did this man learn about water baptism? I answer that he learned it in the preaching of Jesus. No man can preach Jesus without preaching water baptism. That's a fact. Why, you couldn't even tell how Jesus began His work, for He started His personal ministry by being baptized in the River Jordan. You couldn't even tell how He concluded His earthly ministry, for He closed it by telling the apostles, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit."

Once in a while someone who is ignorant of God's Word will say that preachers should just talk about Christ and not harp so much on baptism. Their idea is to preach Christ and let baptism alone. Bless your life, you can't preach Christ without preaching baptism. The man who preaches Christ and does not mention baptism either leaves out the example of His Lord, or else neglects to quote the great commission as given by the Lord. It cannot be done by an honest man. I'm not surprised that when Philip preached Christ to this individual that the man wanted to be baptized in water. Philip would tell him that Jesus himself was baptized and said it was necessary to fulfill all righteousness. He would also tell him that Jesus said, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." The man wanted to be saved, so he knew he would have to obey the command to be baptized. There's no way around it!

But when Philip heard the question, "What doth hinder me to be baptized?" what did he reply? I want to know, for whatever Philip said to that earnest individual, I want to say to those who ask me the same question. Did Philip tell him to kneel down and put his hand on the chariot and he would be saved right where he was? Did he? Come on now and answer that, you who tell people to get down by their radios and pray for salvation?

Did he tell him to pray until God spoke peace to his soul? Did he tell that man that he would present his testimony to the church, and they would vote on it, and if it was satisfactory they would take him in? Did he tell him that they would accept him on probation and if he was worthy they would baptize him at the end of six months? Did he tell him he would have to memorize the catechism first? Did he tell him that? You know he did not. Why not? Because Philip was a *gospel* preacher, that's why!

And that kind of thing isn't a part of the gospel of Jesus Christ at all. But did Philip tell the man to forget about it, since baptism was not essential anyway? No, sir! Did Philip ask him which mode he wanted? Indeed not, for Philip knew that there was no such thing as modes of baptism. The word itself means to "dip, plunge, immerse, cover up, overwhelm, bury, submerge." Philip knew that!

What did he tell the man? Let's read it! "And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God" (verse 37). Then if you come to me and express a desire to be baptized, I shall ask you only if you believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. If you do so believe, you are a subject of baptism. We continue with this example, "And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch and he baptized him."

Please note that they went down into the water! Only immersion requires this. Baptism requires a burial. Paul says, "Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism" (Romans 6:4). Anything that does not require the burial of the individual is not baptism. Concerning the baptism of the eunuch, John Calvin, eminent founder of the Presbyterian Church, says, "Here we see the rite used among men of old time in baptism; for they put the whole body into the water."

Martin Luther, the great founder of the Lutheran Church, said, "The term baptism is a Greek word; it may be rendered by the Latin *mersio*: when we immerse anything in water, that it may be entirely covered with water. And though the custom be quite abolished among the generality, nevertheless they ought to be wholly immersed, and immediately to be drawn out again, for the etymology of the word seems to require it." Again, in his Primary Works, page 192, Luther declares, "For this reason I could wish that the baptized should be totally immersed, according to the meaning of the word."

John Wesley, the father of the Methodist Church, in his "Notes on the New Testament, Romans 6:4," says, "The term 'buried with Him' alludes to the ancient manner of baptizing by immersion." Thus we find that these great men who were deep students of the Bible and founders of three great religions were honest

enough to admit that the word "baptize" means "to immerse" and that this was the manner followed by the early church. Then we ask the question, "Who changed God's plan?" If immersion was demanded by Christ and practiced in the early church, will anything else be acceptable today? When did Christ change? When did He alter His mind or the rules concerning obedience? Echo answers "When?"

If you come to me this day and desire to obey your Lord and to become a member of the New Testament church, I will ask you if you believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. If you reply in the affirmative I will then take you down into the water and baptize you beneath that liquid wave exactly as Philip baptized the eunuch. I know that is a safe thing to do. I know that by so doing you will be obeying the truth as it is revealed. You can read it for yourself. And that is the thing you should do.

What we say may not agree with your ideas. But it agrees with the Word of God. And you cannot be saved upon your ideas anymore than I can be saved upon mine. You are going to be judged by the Word of God. You may not like it, you may rebel against it. You may even hate it and denounce it, but you will still be judged by it. Would it not be better to simply do what it says and thus take no chances with your eternal soul? "And now, why tarriest thou? arise and be baptized and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord."

GOD'S REVELATION TO YOU

I expect to make some surprising statements today! As a matter-of-fact I will say some things which a majority of my audience will not believe. In some instances those things will come as a distinct shock. Yet, every one of them is true, and they can be substantiated by the Bible.

Occasionally I come in contact with an individual who tells me that Jesus appeared to him and told him what to do to be saved. A short time ago a certain man said he was plowing in his field, when all of a sudden, he saw a vision of an angel and that cele-

tial being spoke to him plainly and told him to believe if he expected to go to heaven when he died. I once heard a woman say that she was peeling potatoes in her kitchen when some mysterious force like a stroke knocked the knife from her hands and brought her to her knees. She said she knew it was the Lord, and she heard a voice almost like the wind, and that voice told her to read a certain place in her Bible and she would be saved. At the risk of being rude, even offensive, I want to say frankly, freely and in all candor, that I do not believe the Lord or an angel appeared to any of these people. I'm not charging them with being dishonest, although people can tell the things which they imagine until they get to believing them; but they certainly were deceived, and I expect to prove that.

Here are some startling statements. Jesus Christ cannot appear to anyone personally today to tell him what to do to be saved. Even if he did appear to you, he *would not* tell you what to do. I'll go farther than that and say that if Christ or an angel appeared, they *could not* tell you what to do to be saved. I do not mean to imply a physical impossibility at all. But if Christ came to you and told you what to do to be saved, he would defeat His own plan, deny His own truth, and make Himself a falsifier. Since with Him it is impossible to lie, then He could not tell you what to do, for He has already told us that His revelation of salvation will be through a different medium.

When Jesus left this earth, He gave into the hands of men the right to announce the terms of salvation. He said to the apostles, "Go ye therefore and teach all nations" (Matthew 28:19). He told them, "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel unto every creature" (Mark 16:15). Paul said God had given to men the ministry of reconciliation. God chose men to be His ambassadors to the world. Listen to the apostle, "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God" (2 Corinthians 5:20). God appointed men in Christ's stead to implore the world to repent. So, if Christ came back and took over that work, then he would defeat the very plan of His Father.

The gospel has been given to earthen vessels. Paul says in 2 Corinthians 4:3-7, "But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost . . . for we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the

Lord. . . . But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us." Men are saved by obeying the gospel preached unto them, not by celestial beings but by earthen vessels. Angels are not earthen vessels. Neither is Jesus. Men are earthen vessels and the gospel has been given into their hands to declare.

Angels are interested in your salvation. But if an angel came to your home this afternoon and wanted to see you saved, all it could do would be to tell you to send for a gospel preacher to tell you the words necessary to obey. Yes, I am sure of that. Let me prove it. There was a man by the name of Cornelius, a good man. But he had not obeyed the gospel. About three o'clock one afternoon he looked up and saw a plain vision of an angel. Let me read it to you. "He saw in a vision plainly about the ninth hour of the day an angel of God coming in to him, and saying unto him, Cornelius" (Acts 10:3). Now, what did this angel tell the man to do? Listen as I continue to read, "Now send men to Joppa, and call for one Simon, whose surname is Peter. He lodgeth with one Simon a tanner, whose house is by the seaside: he shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do" (Acts 10:5, 6).

It was a long, wearisome journey to Joppa. Why didn't the angel just tell Cornelius what to do? Why send all the way to that other city to get a man to come and tell him words whereby he and his house should be saved, as Cornelius later phrased it. The answer is that the angel could not reveal God's will to a sinner. That was the work of men. It was the work of "earthen vessels."

If Jesus met you on the road today, and you got down before Him in the dust and asked Him what to do, He would not tell you. I know He would not, because He is no respecter of persons. If He would tell you what to do under those circumstances, He would tell others under the same circumstances. And if He would not tell one man under such conditions, He would not tell any man under like conditions. We are all forced to admit that. And now let me prove that Christ would not tell you what to do to be saved, if you met Him on the road.

I'm sure he would not, because once He had a sinner right down in the dirt before Him. That sinner was Saul of Tarsus. If ever a man needed to be saved, it was that man. He hated

Jesus and was at that very moment on his way to another city to kill Christians. Then Jesus appeared to him on the way (Acts 9:17). The guilty sinner fell to the earth, and heard the voice of the Son of God saying, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?" Let's see what Saul did. The Bible says, "And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" (Acts 9:6). Now, here's a fair test. Here is Jesus with a sinner right down in the dust on the road. That sinner asks what he must do. Did Jesus tell him? No, He did not. Let us read. "And the Lord said unto him, Arise and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do" (Acts 9:6).

Why didn't Jesus tell that man what to do? He couldn't without violating His word and God's entire plan. The Bible asks, "How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher" (Romans 10:14). So all that Christ could do, if He remained faithful to His will, was to tell this man where to go and find a gospel preacher. When Saul entered the city of Damascus, the Lord called a certain disciple by the name of Ananias and told him to go tell Paul what to do to become a Christian. Are you greater than the apostle Paul? Do you think Jesus would come and tell you what to do to be saved and yet refuse to tell this great man of old? The truth of it is that Jesus and the angels do not personally come to anyone today to tell them the terms of salvation. In the face of the teaching of the gospel, I suggest that you be careful about going around telling such experiences, lest you be found making God a liar and thus be forced to pay the penalty.

The Holy Spirit does not testify to men directly today the terms of salvation. All in the world that it can do is to get you in touch with a gospel proclaimer. The Holy Ghost is not an earthen vessel! When the Holy Spirit wanted the Ethiopian eunuch to be saved, it did not appear to the sinner at all. Instead the Spirit came to a preacher of the gospel in another city and told him to go down and tell the eunuch what to do. Why didn't the Spirit do the job directly? Why take this man away from a place where the whole city was listening to the preaching of the gospel? The Spirit had to secure a preacher of the gospel to inform the eunuch, for that is God's plan.

Even if Christ, the Holy Spirit or angels appeared to you, they

would not tell you anything different than that which you can read for yourself in the New Testament. I'm sure you'd not take the position that Christ has changed in the last few years and has a new method of saving people. Then, if He hasn't changed, you've got written down in the gospel just what He would tell you if He did appear. God never does anything for a man that He can do for himself, so since you can investigate the Bible and find the will of God, He certainly is not going to reveal it to you miraculously. Some folks certainly have an exalted sense of their own importance. They think that God will ignore all He has ever said, set aside His plans, and create a special method just for their own benefit. How silly! How ridiculous!

The rich man in hell wanted Abraham to send someone back from the dead to warn his brothers. He was told that they had the recorded words of Moses and the prophets, and they could hear them. This didn't satisfy the rich man. He wanted the Lord to do something miraculous. He said if someone went to them who had risen from the dead they would believe. He was told that if they would not hear Moses and the prophets, they would not be persuaded though one rose from the dead. You've got the gospel today. You have it right in your homes. It contains the word of Christ and of the Holy Spirit. If you'll not accept that, you wouldn't believe if they appeared unto you personally, which they will not. Obey the gospel as it is preached unto you. Accept it today. Don't wait for a mysterious manifestation!

THE CONVERSION OF SAUL

In my previous talk I made the assertion that Christ does not appear to men today for the purpose of saving them. In connection therewith I mentioned the case of Saul of Tarsus. Now, a great many of you may be wondering why Christ appeared unto this man at all, if it was not for the purpose of telling him what he must do in order to be saved. I want you to study with me today the life and conversion of this man. It will be helpful to all of us and will answer a great many of your questions about God's will.

Saul was born into a strict Jewish family in Tarsus, a chief city of Cilicia. He was taken from his home to Jerusalem and there grew up at the feet of Gamaliel, an aged teacher of the Jewish law. A member of the sect of the Pharisees, he was proud of his ancestry in the tribe of Benjamin. When he was a young man, the doctrine of Christianity began to be taught. Saul hated it with every fiber of his moral being. As the Jewish hatred smoldered and finally burst into a flame of persecution, this man became a ringleader of those who decided to blot the name of Christ from off the earth. We are told, "As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed them to prison" (Acts 8:3).

A lot of people think that a man is all right with God just as long as he thinks he is right. But that is not true. A man is not right in God's sight unless he does God's will. Paul later said, "I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth" (Acts 26:9). His heart did not condemn him. He really thought that he was doing the thing God wanted him to do. But he was wrong. You cannot please God even if you are sincere in thinking the wrong thing. Sincerity is no substitute for truth. A man can be sincere and still be in error. Paul was that way.

Others think that if a man puts his whole heart into a thing and manifests a lot of zeal, that it will be acceptable. You've heard men argue that God would not condemn a man who zealously put forth his efforts for a religious cause, even if that cause was not in harmony with the Bible. But that is not true, either. Paul was full of zeal at the very time he sought to destroy the church of Christ. He affirmed to the Jews, "I was taught according to the perfect manner of the fathers, and was zealous toward God, as ye all are this day. And I persecuted this way (that is, the Christian way) unto the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women" (Acts 22:3, 4). He was zealous to a great degree, but when you are wrong, the more zeal you have, the more harm you can do. Later, Paul said of the Jews, "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they might be saved. For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteous-

ness of God" (Romans 10:1-3). A lot of people may be zealous, but not know God's truth. Paul was like that, and his very zeal was used to hurt the cause of Christ.

Again, a great many think that as long as one's conscience does not condemn him that God will not either. But that idea is false. Paul said that he had lived in all good conscience before God. But his conscience taught him to kill the disciples and attempt to destroy the church. The reason his conscience taught him that such was all right was because he had been educated to believe it. But the teaching he had received was contrary to God's will. No man's conscience is a safe guide. The only safe guide in all this world in religious matters is the **Word of God**.

In harmony with his conscience and full of zeal to persecute the church, Paul started out to Damascus. The record says, "Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest, and desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem" (Acts 9:1, 2). Just before the company reached Damascus, a very peculiar happening occurred. A light shone round about them, and Paul fell to the earth and heard a voice saying, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?" He was told that the speaker was Jesus whom he was persecuting, and thereupon asked the question, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" Jesus told him to "Arise, and go into the city and it will be told thee what thou must do."

It is evident that Christ did not appear unto Paul to tell him what to do in order to be saved, for He refused to tell him when he asked. Then, why did He appear to him at all? I answer that Christ came unto Paul in order to make him *an apostle*. An apostle had to be an eye-witness of Jesus after His resurrection from the dead to make his testimony credible. Let us see if that is why the Saviour came to him. When the Lord appeared to Ananias, a certain disciple of Damascus, to get him to go tell Paul what to do to become a Christian, he affirmed, "Go thy way: for he (Paul) is a chosen vessel unto Me to bear My name before the Gentiles, and kings and children of Israel" (Acts 9:15). Thus, when Ananias came to Paul, he said, "The God of our fathers hath chosen thee, that thou shouldest know His will, and see that

Just One: and shouldest hear the voice of His mouth, for thou shalt be His witness unto all men of what thou hast seen and heard" (Acts 22:14, 15).

Now, let us hear Paul's further account of what Jesus himself said upon the occasion. I shall read from Acts 26:15, 16. "And I said, Who art thou, Lord? And He said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest. But rise and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee." Can anything be plainer? Jesus says that He appeared to Paul to make him a minister and witness of the things which he then saw among others. He didn't appear to him to convert him. He didn't appear to tell him what to do to become a Christian at all.

But someone did appear unto Paul to do that. The person to whom I refer was Ananias. Let us pick up the record as Paul himself relates it. "And when I could not see for the glory of that light, being led by the hand of them that were with me, I came into Damascus. And one Ananias, a devout man according to the law, having a good report of all the Jews which dwelt there, came unto me and stood, and said unto me, Brother Saul, receive thy sight. And the same hour I looked up upon him. And he said, The God of our fathers hath chosen thee, that thou shouldest know His will, and see that Just One, and shouldest hear the voice of His mouth. For thou shalt be His witness unto men of what thou hast seen and heard. And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord" (Acts 22:12-16). Saul was told to go into the city and it would be told him what he must do. The only thing he was commanded to do was to arise and be baptized. It is evident, then, that this is what Jesus wanted him to do.

Let us be clear in this matter. It is important! A short time back, when I was conversing with a certain individual, he told me it didn't make a particle of difference what the Bible said, he knew that Jesus had appeared unto him personally and told him what to do to be saved. I pointed out that Jesus did not make a personal appearance for that purpose, that this work had been consigned unto men. He immediately pointed to the case of Paul, and said that Jesus appeared to him to tell him what to do. I

pointed out that Jesus did not appear to Paul for that reason at all, and if He did, He failed in His purpose, for He refused to tell him, and made him wait for a gospel preacher. There were two persons who appeared to Paul. One was Jesus; the other was Ananias. Jesus appeared to Paul to make him an apostle, but Ananias appeared to him to make him a Christian.

Now, Jesus does not have apostles on earth today as in the beginning of the church, for their work ceased with the close of the miraculous age. Since no apostles are being made today, there are no personal appearances of Jesus to men at this time. But men must still become Christians, and it is the duty of gospel preachers to appear to men and tell them what to do to become children of God. And they should tell them exactly what Paul was told. That's what I am telling you this day. If you are convinced that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, if you have repented of your sins and are willing to confess Him before men, then why tarriest thou? Arise and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.

Have you obeyed the call of the Lord? Have you been immersed in water upon a confession of your faith? If not, why not obey the voice of the Son of God before it is too late? Let us baptize you in water in obedience to the command of the New Testament, that you may rise and walk in newness of life.

A GOOD MAN MADE BETTER

Our lesson today is going to deal with the conversion of Cornelius. He was the first Gentile to be admitted to the church. Since most of us are of that race, it will be interesting to note exactly what happened in this case as mentioned in Acts, chapter ten.

Cornelius was a captain in the Roman army. Officially he was called a "centurion," which means "one who is over a hundred soldiers." His cohort was known as "The Italian Band." Insofar as character is concerned, Cornelius was an outstanding example of integrity and sincerity. He was a religious man and revered

God. In this his family also united with him. He was generous in his assistance of the poor and "gave much alms to the people." Besides, he prayed to God always (Acts 10:2). But, being a Gentile, he was still under the patriarchal law. When God gave the written law to the Jews at Mount Sinai, it supplemented the law which previously had been revealed by direct contact and passed on from father to son. It did not repeal that law insofar as the Gentiles were concerned, but only gave the Jews a more permanent structure of government until Christ came.

But after Jesus came and died, God extended the gospel to the Jews as a means of salvation. Three and one-half years later he did the same for the Gentiles. That's what Paul means when he affirms, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation, to the Jew first and also to the Greek" (Romans 1:16). The Jews were given an opportunity to enter the kingdom upon the day of Pentecost. They were told to "repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins" (Acts 2:38). But they did not preach the gospel to the Gentiles until God ordained that the family of Cornelius should hear and be saved. The introduction of the truth to them rescued them from the sinking ship of the Patriarchal Dispensation and gave them an opportunity to become members of the One Body, the church.

At three o'clock in the afternoon, Cornelius was praying. An angel stood beside him and told him that his prayer had come up for a memorial before God. The celestial messenger also instructed him to send men to Joppa and get a preacher by the name of Simon Peter, and said, "He will tell thee what thou oughtest to do" (Acts 10:6). Observe that the angel did not tell this man what to do. He could not, for he was not an "earthen vessel" and Christ has given the truth into the hands of men to be preached to the world.

Cornelius obeyed the divine instructions. He sent two of his trusted household attendants with a religious soldier unto Joppa. As they drew near that city the next day, something peculiar was happening. It was about noon and Simon Peter was hungry. As the members of the household of Simon the tanner, with whom he was residing near the seashore, were preparing lunch, Peter went up on the flat roof of the dwelling to pray in seclusion

During this interval he fell into a trance. He saw a vessel let down from heaven. It appeared like a sheet with the four corners drawn up. It contained all manner of beasts and unclean things. But a voice told Peter to arise and kill and eat of the flesh of these beasts. Peter declined with the statement, "Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean." The voice replied, "What God has cleansed that call not thou common or unclean." Three times this occurred and then the vessel was drawn up into heaven.

As Peter was wondering about the meaning of this vision, the men from Cornelius stood without at the gate. The Holy Spirit told Peter to go with them, and he did so, taking with him six Jews who were members of the church. When they arrived in the city of Caesarea where Cornelius lived, they came to his house and found a huge crowd of relatives and friends who had been summoned together. As Peter went in, it dawned upon him that God had prepared him for preaching to the Gentiles by showing him that these whom the Jews had previously esteemed unclean were now to be acceptable unto God. He opened his gospel preaching to them with the memorable statement, "Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons, but in every nation, he that feareth Him and worketh righteousness is accepted of Him" (Acts 10:34, 35).

As Peter was saying, "Whosoever believeth in Christ shall receive remission of sins," a startling thing occurred. The record says, "While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word." The Jews who were present saw this and were astonished that the Spirit of God was poured out upon the Gentiles also. But Peter answered, "Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we? And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord" (Acts 10:47, 48).

Now, here is where a great many people make a serious error. They assume that the Holy Spirit came upon these people to save them. But that is not true! The Holy Spirit never appeared to anyone for the purpose of converting that person. The Bible does not teach that, and you'll look in vain for a single occurrence. Those who teach that the baptism of the Holy Spirit was for the purpose of saving those who received it teach a falsehood.

What did save these people? Note that the angel told Cornelius to send for Peter, who will "tell thee what thou must do" (verse 6). Did Peter tell them to be baptized with the Holy Ghost? Indeed not! He was surprised when they received it. What did he tell them to do? He commanded them to be baptized in water! Cornelius was not saved by the direct appearance of the Holy Spirit. He was saved by the preaching of Peter and his obedience to it. Peter in recounting this said, "And he shewed us how he had seen an angel in his house, which stood and said unto him, Send men to Joppa, and call for Simon, whose surname is Peter; who shall tell thee words whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved" (Acts 11:13). Either therefore, these people were saved by the preaching of Peter, or the angel lied.

If the Holy Ghost came upon them to save them, why send down and have Peter walk thirty-five miles to preach to them? Could they not have had the Holy Spirit just as well without Peter being present? But what did the Holy Spirit accomplish in coming upon these people? What was the purpose of its outpouring at this time? The Bible answers that! It came upon them to convince the Jews that the Gentiles were to be accepted as fellow heirs and members of the same body, upon their obedience of the gospel.

Just as it took a miracle to convince Peter that he should go and preach to the Gentiles, so it also took one to batter down the prejudice of the Jewish members of the church, so they would accept the Gentiles as brethren. This is not supposition. It is what the Bible teaches. When Peter left the home of Cornelius and went back to Jerusalem, "they that were of the circumcision contended with him, saying, Thou wentest in to men uncircumcised, and didst eat with them. But Peter rehearsed the matter from the beginning and expounded it by order unto them" (Acts 11:2-4).

He told them, "As I began to speak, the Holy Ghost fell on them, as on us at the beginning. . . . Forasmuch then as God gave them the like gift as He did to us, who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ; what was I, that I could withstand God?" (Acts 11:15-17). What was the effect upon these Jewish Christians? Let us read, "when they heard these things, they held their peace and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted

repentance unto life" (Acts 11:18). So we learn from this account that the Holy Ghost came upon the members of this Gentile family, not to convert or save them, for Peter was sent to tell them what to do to be saved. But the Holy Spirit came for the purpose of keeping Peter from withstanding God's will, and to convince the Jews that the Gentiles henceforth were to be upon an equal spiritual basis with them.

The Bible is plain if you'll let it be. It is not contradictory. Upon the day of Pentecost, Simon Peter commanded the believing Jews to "Repent and be baptized everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins" (Acts 2:38). At the household of Cornelius he commanded the Gentiles to be baptized in water also. Whether you are Jew or Gentile, you must obey the same command. You must come through the same door. God does not have one door labeled "FOR THE JEWS" and another with the caption "FOR GENTILES." Whatever your nationality, you will and can be saved only by doing what you are commanded to do.

Believe on Jesus as the Son of God, repent of your sins, confess your faith before men, and then be immersed in water for the remission of your sins that are past. You may then rise to walk in newness of life. Old things will have passed away. All things will have become new. I plead with you who have not obeyed to do so today. Tomorrow may be too late!

THE NEW NAME

Hundreds of years before Jesus came into the world, the prophets of God predicted that His people would be called by a new name. I cite as proof of this the words of Isaiah, as found in the first two verses of chapter 62 of his book. "For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth. And the Gentiles shall see thy righteousness, and all kings thy glory: and thou shalt be called by a new name, which the mouth of the Lord shall name." There are two particulars which I desire you to notice about this

prediction: first, that this was to be a new name, and second, that it was to be given only after the Gentiles had seen the system of righteousness which God introduced through the gospel.

Now, let us hear the prophet again, this time in Isaiah 66:22, "For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before Me, saith the Lord, so shall your seed and your name remain." This assures us that whatever the new name would be which the Lord gave, it would be a permanent one and both it and those who wore it as the seed of God would endure as long as the new heavens and the new earth. This is indeed a wonderful promise.

I turn once more to the words of Isaiah, chapter 56, verse 5, and read, "Even unto them will I give in Mine house and within My walls a place and a name better than of sons and daughters: I will give them an everlasting name that shall not be cut off." Let us summarize all of these facts as revealed so many centuries before their fulfillment. We learn that God promised to give His people a name which would be from His own mouth. That name was to be given in His house; it was to be given after the Gentiles had seen God's righteousness; it was to be a new name; it was to be one better than that of sons and daughters, and it was to be an everlasting name, continuing as long as the new heavens and the new earth which the Lord would make. Certainly we should want to wear that name if we can discover it. Let us see if we can locate it!

We know it was not the name "brethren," for that term was not a new one by any means. We read a long time before of Joseph and his *brethren*. Nor could it be the name "disciple," for that was not new. Isaiah himself said before he uttered the prophecy about the new name, "Bind up the testimony, seal the law among My disciples" (Isaiah 8:16). Neither could it be the name "saints," for Moses, Job, David, Samuel and Solomon all speak of the saints of God a great many years before Isaiah was born upon earth. So that was not a new name at all. Those who received the new name would no doubt be disciples, brethren and saints, but these terms only emphasized matter of their relationship and character. The new name was to be an all-embracing term. What was it?

You will recall that in a previous lesson we learned that the

gospel was taken to the Gentiles at the house of Cornelius. It was then they were permitted to see the righteousness of God. Peter in recounting this occasion said, "Men and brethren, ye know how that a good while ago God made choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel and believe" (Acts 15:7). Since the new name was to be given after this event, we must come down this side of that occasion for our search. The tenth chapter of Acts informs us of the conversion of Cornelius and the first Gentiles. In the following chapter Peter is called upon to testify of his mission to Cornelius, and in that very same chapter the new name is revealed unto us. I ask you to listen while I read, "And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch" (Acts 11:26). That is the new name which God wants us to wear as an individual title today. It is the only one which he wants us to have.

Let us be sure that this is the heaven-given name. We must all admit that it was a new name. It had never occurred before and the divine record says that this was its first use as applied to the disciples. Too, it was given after the Gentiles had seen the righteousness of God. So it fulfills those qualifications. Now, we affirm that it was given to God's people in God's house. The house of God is the church. I read, "These things write I unto thee, hoping to come unto thee shortly, but if I tarry long that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the *house of God*, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth" (1 Timothy 3:15). Was the name Christian given in the church? The very verse which introduces the name has this, "And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people. And the disciples were called Christians first at Antioch." Certainly this was in the house of God.

But you may wish to know in what way this name is better than that of "sons and daughters." I reply that the name "sons" can only signify one portion of God's people; it requires the name "daughters" to designate the remainder. But the word "Christian" applies with equal right and force to both. Further, the name "son" merely signifies relationship. But the name "Christian" not only indicates that the one who wears it rightly is a son of God but goes beyond that and tells of his character, his hope and his eternal reward. The name itself includes the name of

"Christ." You cannot spell or write the word "Christian" without giving honor to the Saviour. It means *anointed*, and a Christian today is one of God's anointed. Just as the kings and priests under the Old Testament were anointed, so we today are kings and priests unto God.

I wish also to remind you that the prophet said this new name would be an everlasting name. It is one that will not be cut off. It is a signal honor to be entitled to wear this great name and thus to be designated "Christ-like." Woe unto him who disgraces it and pretends to be faithful unto the Lord while living a life of hypocrisy and pretence. Mind you, when one on this earth goes out and commits some crime, it leaves a stain on the family name. The father and mother suffer in the eyes of the world even though innocent. And thus it is with the name "Christian." When a man defiles that name, he brings reproach upon the name of Jesus. He blackens the name which is holy before the Lord.

We who are members of the Churches of Christ feel that the name "Christian" is the only one we should wear. We do not wear the name of some man, of some ordinance, or of some method or mode of work. Regardless of how important baptism may be, God never gave us a new name signifying our belief in that one phase of spiritual activity. We feel that every portion of the work and worship should be carried out with a proper devotion to arrangement and method, but we do not feel that such a procedure should be used as a title to designate us. We acknowledge the greatness of such men as John Calvin, John Wesley and Martin Luther, but neither of these died for us and there is no salvation in the names they were given by their humble parents. Nor has God chosen the name of either of these men, as the new name by which His people are to be called. Therefore, we choose to remain "Christians"; just that, without another hyphenated name attached to it. If we live up to all that is implied in that word, we will have all we can do.

I want to ask a few questions of those of you who profess to be Christians or "Christ-like." Do you think you can be a "Christian" and frequent the tavern where filthy language and dirty stories abound as intoxicating liquors are sold across the bar? Do you think you can feast your eyes upon the lewd and lascivious actions of a gang of whoremongers and prostitutes skipping gaily

across the screen of a darkened theater and be a Christian? Do you think you can take some other man's wife in your arms and hug her to you, the while you dance to sensuous music, and still be Christ-like? Do you? If you cannot deny your Lord by such conduct, then you apparently feel that Jesus would be guilty of frequenting such places if He were on earth. You know better than that, and you should know that by your presence at such places you crucify the Son of God afresh and put Him to an open shame. Shame on those of you who profess to be Christians and yet indulge in the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye and the pride of life! Shame on those of you who go to church on Sunday to serve the Lord and spend the remainder of the days of the week serving the devil!

To those who are not Christians, I issue the invitation today to obey the Word of the Lord and become obedient children of His; to those who have set to their seal that God is true but have gone back to the weak and beggarly elements of the world, we plead that you will return before it is too late and live so that the world may know there is something to the name that we wear. Honor that name by the life that you live!

PREACHING AT PHILIPPI

The sixteenth chapter of the book of Acts is indeed an interesting one. It records for us the preaching of the first gospel sermon upon the European continent of which we have a record. Moreover it details the conversion of two individuals, together with their households. One was a business woman and the other a public official. We feel that a brief reference to the outstanding events recorded herein might be beneficial to all of us.

While the apostle Paul was still in Asia, after he had so recently secured Timothy to travel with him as an evangelist, there came to him a vision by night. In this there appeared a man of the province of Macedonia, who said to the apostle, "Come over into Macedonia and help us." Without hesitancy, Paul and his traveling companions forthwith set sail for Europe. Passing the island of Samothracia, they landed at Neapolis, from which

port they walked over land to Philippi. This city, named after the father of Alexander the Great, was under Roman control, and a colony had been established there, made up of Romans and others who were directly chargeable to Caesar.

The people in this city had no synagogue, but there were a few women who were interested in maintaining a worship of God amidst the paganism which was so rife, and they met regularly for prayer on the bank of a river, outside the city limits. Hearing of this, and knowing that they could find an audience ready assembled, the gospel preachers went to the place and sat down and spoke to the women who resorted thither. Among these persons was a business woman. She was from the Asian city of Thyatira. Her occupation was the merchandising of purple dyes, which were used for the robes of royalty and nobility in those days. Her name was Lydia and she was a worshipper of God, although she had never heard the gospel.

Luke, who was with Paul, describes what transpired in these simple words, "She heard us; whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul. And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought us saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house and abide there" (Acts 16:14, 15). I am sure that many who listen this day might do well to imitate the example of this sincere woman. Let us note a few of the characteristics which she must have possessed. In the first place, though she was a long way from home, she still worshipped God. A lot of people will go to church as long as they are down in the country where it is the custom. But if they leave home on a business trip, they never think about the worship of God. I know people who once attended services regularly, but since coming to St. Louis have never even bothered to try and locate the church. I am glad Lydia was well-enough informed to know that God was one place as well as another, and that He will not excuse our neglect simply because we are not conveniently situated.

I want to mention also that Lydia was not prejudiced. In spite of the fact that what the apostles taught was new to her, she did not offer the excuse that her parents had not followed that doctrine, so she was not going to do it. Neither did she say that she felt one way was as good as another. Nor did she venture the

suggestion that as long as she was already sincere in her worship, she did not feel it necessary to change. Just as soon as she learned the whole truth, she accepted it. This meant a change from her former position, but she was willing to make that change for the sake of the truth.

Too, it must be recalled that she was not a mere hearer. A lot of people in the world are spiritual "hangers-on." They go to church and attend every meeting. But they never do anything else. That is as far as they get. Not so with Lydia, for the writer says, "She attended unto the things which were spoken." She didn't say she was not quite ready; she didn't ask for a more convenient time; she didn't say that some day she would accept—she just did what the apostle commanded in his gospel sermon.

Lydia did not quibble about God's plan. She did not use any vain reasoning. She did not say that she could not see the need of being baptized; nor did she ask how God would remit her sins by her obedience to this ordinance. No, she did not query or question the command. She just obeyed it! Further, she influenced others to do the same thing, for we read that "she was baptized and her household." How many times a godly and sincere woman can have a good and salutary effect upon those about her, and especially upon members of her own family! I have known wives to put off becoming Christians because they wanted to wait for their husbands. Sometimes a mother will express a desire to wait for her children to obey. How foolish this is! Mother, step out upon the Lord's side and lead others to do the same. Perhaps someone is waiting for you to make that step this day and if you do not make it a soul may be lost in eternity, which could have been saved had you obeyed the Lord.

Lydia and her household became the charter members of one of the most faithful churches of Christ upon the face of the earth. Later the apostle sent a letter to the congregation which started in her house, and he said, "I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy, for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now" (Philippians 1:3-5). The first day must have been the day that he immersed the first convert in Philippi and, of course, that one was Lydia. Immediately this congregation, though small and beset round about with the heathen, became interested

in mission work. They were not satisfied to just sit down and hire a man to preach to them all of the time, but rather they sent Paul to other places, or at least supported him when persecution forced him to flee to other points.

It is interesting to hear him say, "Even as it is meet for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart; inasmuch as both in my bonds, and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, ye all are partakers of my grace" (Philippians 1:7). Even when other congregations were slack in their duty of supporting the preaching of the truth, this little congregation kept right on fulfilling their obligation to the Lord. We read once more, "Now ye know also, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only. For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my necessity" (Philippians 4:15). How different from some of the churches today! There are some now who say, "If I pay for any preaching, I want to hear it." That is selfishness gone to seed.

We are saved in order to save others. We are led to the light so that we may let that light shine before men that others may glorify God. How many prayers have you ever offered for mission work? How many dollars have you ever sent to the support of someone who was sounding out the word and holding forth the truth? How many tracts have you distributed telling others what to do to be saved? Do you lean altogether upon the work of others? Do you argue that there are plenty more besides yourself and you will let them carry the burden?

I like the example of Lydia and the church of which she was a charter member. I like their courage. Nowadays we feel that we cannot do mission work unless the locality is just right, unless we have a nice meeting-house made to order, unless we have everything just as we would want it. We have everything but faith. The Spirit of God is no longer in the midst of the church in a lot of places. Fear is written upon the hearts of many. We are afraid to heed the command to "launch out into the deep." Perhaps we have made an effort and it has not proven successful. We offer the age-old excuse, "Master, we have toiled all night and caught nothing," but, unlike the apostles, we do not say, "Nevertheless at Thy word, we will let down the net."

Let us catch the fervor that marked the early church. Let us recapture the spirit of enthusiasm and sincerity which was so prevalent among them. Let us talk the Christ to our friends and neighbors. If you have not accepted the gospel, be like Lydia. Be baptized into Christ. If you have accepted it, be like Lydia—start at once to try and lead others to accept it. If you cannot go personally and take the truth to others, you can hold up the hands of those who do. You can contribute of your means that the Word of the Lord may be sent forth and that dying souls may be taken for the Lord, and redeemed from the clutches of sin and Satan.

Never mind if the community where you live is a hard one in which to work. It cannot be as hard as was Philippi. Put forth more effort. Meet the challenge. Overcome the obstacles. Let's quit talking so much about how to get the job done and go out and do it. Let's fill the land with faithful churches of Christ such as the one which Paul established at Philippi. We can do it if we have enough Lydias in these days! Will you be one?

TRUE NOBILITY

The standards by which the world judges greatness are not at all the standards of God. In the eyes of humanity a man may be adjudged great because of the amount of material wealth which he possesses, or the magnificence of his real estate or the car he drives. Sometimes he is considered noble because of circumstances of birth, or because of the secular knowledge which he has amassed, or the colleges he has attended. Yet none of these things count in the sight of God. His is a different standard altogether, as we learn from a study of Acts, chapter seventeen.

Paul and Silas had been cast into prison at Philippi, but were released when it was determined that they had the rights of Roman citizenship. They left that city and passed through Amphipolis and Appolonia, and came down to Thessalonica, where there was a Jewish synagogue. There, Paul preached on three consecutive Sabbath days to the worshippers who assembled. When it was determined that a great many people were being influenced by

the gospel, the Jews which did not believe took unto them certain lewd fellows of low-breeding and set all the city in an uproar. They assaulted the house of Jason, who was a relative of Paul, thinking no doubt they would find him there. When they did not, they haled Jason into court and put him under bond. Meanwhile the disciples, to avoid further insurrection and riot, spirited Paul and Silas away by night unto the city of Berea.

In spite of the terrifying experiences from which he had just escaped, Paul went into the synagogue at Berea and began to preach the gospel. Now, I want you to listen to the description given of the inhabitants of this city as I read Acts 17:11, "These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether these things were so." That is nobility as God counts it. Let us analyze it and see if we are qualified to be called noble.

The first thing that we learn is that these people "received the word." They were not prejudiced or biased. They were not averse to learning. Paul was a stranger to them. They had never seen him or heard him before. But they were willing to hear what he had to say and to weigh that carefully with the Bible as the yardstick by which they determined its authenticity. How different with some individuals today! I have heard men say, "I wouldn't believe it if you read it to me in the Bible." I have heard others say, "I wouldn't change my mind from what I have been taught in the past if you proved it by an actual quotation from the Word of God."

I presume that those who make such absurd statements think it sounds smart to talk in that fashion. On the contrary, it is the indication of the deepest ignorance. None of us has arrived at the place where we cannot learn. None of us knows it all. How silly for one to think that in the past he has been taught all that the universe holds for him on the subject of religion and thus is willing to let his entire future be circumscribed by his brief, little past! He may have learned all that he is capable of learning, but the reason he does not learn more is his own feeble lack of capacity and not the fact that there is not much more which he does not know.

The Bereans had better sense. They had better manners. They

didn't act like those of Thessalonica. Instead of persecuting a man who taught something different than that which they had previously heard, they respectfully listened to that man's message. I like the expression, "with all readiness of mind." They were eager for additional information which was of value.

But, mind you, they were careful. Some people are ready to listen to anything that comes along, but they are also ready to gulp it down without giving it due consideration. The mere fact that a man is a preacher does not guarantee that he will always preach the truth. Some of the worst deceivers and biggest frauds upon the face of the earth have hidden under a cloak of religion. Some of the biggest deceptions that have ever been invented have been foisted upon the world through the medium of the pulpit. Don't swallow, "hook, bait, sinker and all," what a man says just because he is a preacher. There are men who make a racket out of religion, and there are false teachers who will deceive you for their own gain. It is neither wise or noble to accept everything you hear without carefully weighing it in the scales of scriptural logic.

The people of Berea heard Paul without prejudice. But they also studied for themselves to see whether these things were so. And they studied the right thing—the holy scriptures. They did not examine their private creeds or look in their confessions of faith to find if what was said was in harmony with the teachings of men. They did not endeavor to ascertain if this was what "our church" had always taught. They went to the Bible, the Word of God, and they endeavored to find out if Paul was teaching what the Bible taught. That is the essential thing. The mere fact that a church has always taught a thing does not make it scriptural. Many churches teach things which the Bible does not recognize as being true at all. If every church taught the truth upon every subject, they would all teach the same thing. The mere fact that they teach different and conflicting things is proof positive that they do not all teach what the scriptures teach. Never mind when you investigate a man's teaching whether it is what your creed teaches. The question is if God's Word teaches it.

I want to emphasize the fact that the Bereans SEARCHED the scriptures. It is one thing to read the Bible but a totally different thing to study it. A lot of people read the Bible through

once a year, and have done so for many years, making a practice of it, and yet never studied in their lifetime. The word *search* implies a diligent seeking for information. They dug down into the scriptures. They compared what the preacher said with what the Bible taught and thus were in a position to properly evaluate what they heard. What a wonderful thing it would be if every person who goes to church would take down notes on what he hears and then go home and search his Bible carefully to see if these things are so! A great many preachers would soon be out of a job unless they changed their teaching to conform to the Word of the Lord. But truth would grow in our land and triumph over the fallacies of Satan. It is unconcern for what the Bible teaches by the masses which has placed us in the religious mess in which we find this land today.

There's another thing about the Bereans which should be noted and that is the fact that they searched the scriptures DAILY. This was a consistent and not a casual practice with them. They went to the Word of the Lord as they did to their own tables. Many there are who read their Bibles occasionally. They feed their bodies with physical food regularly, but their spirits must subsist on the few crumbs occasionally picked up here and there. Bible Study should be a daily diet of the mind. One can get more out of the Book in that way. He soon learns to find his way around in the pages. He finds himself more able to live up to the teachings observed therein.

The Psalmist said, "His delight is in the law of the Lord, and in it doth he meditate day and night." That was his description of the character of a righteous man. The meditation day and night was the result of delighting in the law of God. If one does not delight in a thing, he does not want to think about it. The fact that a man reads his Bible daily without fail is indicative of an overwhelming interest in its teachings. It is a part of true nobility to investigate God's Word and to do it daily.

In view of this, I want to ask you, dear friend, if you are noble in God's sight. You may have no money in the bank, the cottage in which you live may be but a frail shelter from the blast, you may have no sumptuous food for your table, and no beautiful clothing for your back. But you can be noble just the same. True nobility does not come from being born into the family of an

earthly lord, but in the family of the Lord of Lords. It is not a result of your relationship to a piece of a prince but to the Prince of Peace. If you want the heavenly approbation upon your life, then be like the people of Berea. Receive the Word of the Lord with all readiness of mind. Search the scriptures daily. Weigh what you hear and what you are taught by the side of the Bible. Put the preaching that you hear into the eternal balances of justice. Let the Bible, the inspired revelation of heaven, be the determining factor in your acceptance or rejection of all that is offered you.

The Churches of Christ accept no other creed than the Bible. They believe that by it we should live, by it we should die; and they know that by it we shall all be judged. They plead with you to accept it as your compass on the sea of time, and let it be your pilot amidst the dangers of life.