

# PROVEN PROVERBS



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A series of short sermons delivered over  
RADIO STATION WTMV (1490)  
on Sunday afternoons,  
November 3, 1946 to January 26, 1947  
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## CHURCHES OF CHRIST

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## THE WAY THAT SEEMS RIGHT

Several years ago an elderly gentleman entered the train where I was sitting. It was quite apparent that he was very happy. Before long he explained the reason for his joy. His children had opposed him taking a trip because they thought he would become lost in the large rail terminal and perhaps get on the wrong train. However, he had assumed all of the responsibility for the trip, had disclaimed and refused any assistance from the porters, and here at last he was on the train bound for his home. He said it was a big satisfaction just to be able to show them that he could take care of himself, and he would surprise them when he stepped off the train at Cincinnati, Ohio, where he lived.

The train started and was well on its way by the time he told his destination. As a matter-of-fact, the conductor was even then taking up the tickets. When he heard the old man reveal his destination, he came back quickly and said, "My dear man, if you're going to Ohio, you're on the wrong train. This one goes to Kansas City, just the opposite of where you want to go. The train you wanted was on an adjoining track, and they should have refused you permission to board this train." But that was not enough for the aged passenger. He asserted that he could not be mistaken, and thought the conductor was having fun at his expense. Nevertheless, he finally became convinced that he was on the wrong road, although he had thought that he was right.

It is astounding to think of the thousands of people who depend upon their feelings to guide them in matters of spiritual interest. You will hear them say, "Well, as long as my heart doesn't condemn me, I am sure that God will not." Or perhaps they will affirm, "I am sure one way is as good as another, and as long as I feel that I am safe, there's nothing to worry about so far as heaven is concerned." Is that a logical position?

The old man on the train felt that he was on the right road. Did that fact make it the right one? Did that direct the train the way he wanted to go? If a man feels that his money is safe in a hidden spot, does that make it safe? I knew a woman once who

always hid her spare bills in the oven. She told me that she thought it was actually safer than a bank. Once some men entered the house while she was absent, and took the entire roll of bills. Did the fact that she thought they were safe make them so? Does a feeling of safety on the part of the passengers keep a plane from falling? Does it keep banks from closing their doors to the depositors' loss? You know the answer to all of these questions!

You realize that thinking you are right does not make you right! A lot of people feel that even if they seek God in the wrong way, they will still find him, if they are sincere in the search. But suppose you are digging a well in a spot where there is no water. Will you find water anyway, provided that you are sincere in your digging? No! You can sincerely dig your head off for water where there isn't any, and you'll not find it. You can be ever so sincere in your belief that a certain tree has apples on it, but if you arrive and find there aren't any, you'll not be able to pick apples from that tree.

The same thing holds true regarding our obedience unto God. I want to introduce at this juncture a statement from the wisest monarch who ever sat upon an earthly throne, Solomon, who says, "There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death" (Proverbs 16:25). Just because the way you worship seems all right does not make it so. All of you have had the experience when driving of coming to a crossroads and taking the wrong arm of the highway. Certainly you have felt that you were taking the right direction, but if it was wrong, all of the right thinking on earth would not make it right.

God has outlined for us what He expects in the way of personal obedience. Among other things, Jesus said to the apostles, "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark 16:15,16). On the day of Pentecost, when thousands cried out to Peter and the rest of the apostles, desirous of knowing what to do, the answer came back, "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). In Acts 10:46, after he had asked if any man could forbid water that certain ones should be baptized, the apostle Paul commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord.

There is nothing plainer in the Bible than the command to be baptized in water. You can read it for yourself! It permits of no argument, no disputation, no misunderstanding! In spite of the plainness of this command, thousands have the audacity to ignore it, then stand up in the presence of God and say that they think one can be just as well off in God's sight if he is not baptized as if he submits to this ordinance. That is the equivalent of stating that a man is just as well off if he disobeys God as if he obeys Him. How ridiculous for those who profess to love God to ignore the thing which God has requested and commanded, just on the basis of a human "think-so"!

Even those who decide to obey will often seek to follow a different way than the one prescribed by heaven. The Bible plainly teaches that baptism is a burial. All of the scholars in every religious faith acknowledge that the primitive baptism was by immersion. But many of them will then state that they think God is not going to be particular about it, and so long as one thinks he is all right, having been sprinkled, or having had water poured on him, that God will not condemn him. I want you to realize that unless you have been immersed in water, you have not been baptized at all, according to the Bible.

Let me quote from Romans, Chapter 6, Verses 3 to 6: "Know ye not that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ, were baptized into His death? Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death, that like as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of His death, we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection." Now, let us go to Colossians 2:12, "Buried with Him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with Him through the faith of the operation of God."

If that is not enough to appear convincing, consider the example of the Ethiopian eunuch, as recorded for us in Acts 8:36-39. I read, "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? 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. 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. And when

they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing."

Here is a description of a scriptural baptismal service. It was performed in water. The administrator and candidate went down into the water. They came up out of the water. That is God's way. It is a way that is right and cannot be wrong. Did you obey in that way? If you did not, then you have not followed God's way. Perhaps you say that your heart does not condemn you, that you still think you are all right. But, are you all right? Can anyone be right and not do what God has commanded? Can one ignore the simple truth of the Bible and do something else and still be acceptable?

Thinking you are right does not make you right. Saul of Tarsus was a persecutor of the church. He condemned Christians to death. He killed them in his fury and hatred. Even while he was doing so, he thought that he was right. He actually felt that he was doing God service, and said, "I verily thought that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth." He said that he lived in all good conscience before God during that very time. In spite of that, he was wrong, and he never got right until he found the Lord's way and walked therein. Then he could say, "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ."

We plead for all of you who listen this day to enter the way that is right and cannot be wrong. You can be certain when you do what God has told you to do, in just the way He has told you to do it, that you are right. Why take a chance in a way that seemeth right? The end thereof may be the ways of death.

## HOW TO MAKE FRIENDS

In this present series of short discourses on the proverbs of the Word of God, we hope to show that the Bible lays down the principles for a successful and happy career. The answer to most of the problems which trouble you is found in the Bible. It is up-to-date and ahead of date when it comes to providing a solution for the cares and distresses of life.

Young people should get acquainted with the Bible. It has consistently been the world's best selling book through the ages. Such prominence must be merited. It certainly must be deserved. Other books have been written which shared the spotlight for a while, but the things which they offered that were good were soon found to be taught in the Bible. As an example, consider the wonderful course in personality development suggested by the recently published "How to Win Friends and Influence People." In his book, Mr. Dale Carnegie gave modern examples and made present-day applications, but in principle, he merely re-echoed what the Bible had long ago taught. The basic and underlying secret of his volume was to "do unto others as ye would that they should do unto you." This was enunciated by the Savior centuries ago.

Everyone is interested in having friends. That is, most everyone. I know of one man who has shut himself off from the world. A few years ago he was a pleasant companion. Now he refuses to have anything to do with others. He has become unkempt, dresses like a tramp, and is so surly and ill-tempered that the neighbors have nothing to do with him. But that man is an exception to the general rule of mankind. Most of us are so constructed that we sigh for companionship. We need and crave fellowship with others.

Therein lies a grave danger for many. There is not a proper urge which lies within our hearts or bodies for which God has not provided a satisfaction. All of the hungers to which we are subject can find gratification. The hunger for food, water and companionship—these can all be satisfied, but that satisfaction must come through obedience to the laws of God, otherwise a penalty is assessed for violation and abuse.

Occasionally there are those who become panicky at the thought that they are getting along in years, and yet have established no abiding or enduring contacts or friendships. Under such circumstances, they may be swept off their feet, and be led into conditions which may be regretted the remainder of this life, and be punished in the world to come. Anyone can have friends if he is willing to follow the suggestions set forth in the Bible. And they can be friends of the right kind. Friends of the wrong kind are not friends at all. They are really enemies!

True friendship is not based upon outward appearance. Many

a girl has bemoaned the fact that she is not "good looking." She has felt that because of this she is doomed to a life of loneliness. The modern theater with its Hollywood glamour has emphasized physical attractiveness. It has emphasized fleshly beauty. In so doing, it has created a false impression. It has caused hundreds to feel that the only hope of securing abiding friendships is to attempt to look like some screen idol. This is silly!

To prove that looks are not entirely essential to marriage, all you need to do is to look at some who are happily married. Perhaps you have said of a certain couple, "I don't understand what she sees in him." Maybe what he has that is attractive cannot be seen at all. Perhaps it is an inner quality which cannot be detected by sight, but which acts as a magnet to draw out the best there is in others, and thus make them respond to his personality. It is true that good looks may be an asset, and they may give the possessor a certain advantage in life. Still, there are some disadvantages which must be considered also.

In the first place, the very possession of good looks may cause the one who is attractive to become conceited. There is nothing which will so disgust others as conceit. When looks go to your head, admirers take to their heels. No one can win friends by calling attention to her good looks. It is only when such a person seems utterly oblivious of her charms that she is really charming. Those who are "stuck up" are really stuck with something they will have a hard time to overcome. Under such conditions, beauty is a distinct liability.

There is also a danger, when one possesses outward attractiveness, that others may swarm around him, purely for their own self-glory. Those who are fawned upon for their face's sake, rather than for what they really are, may soon "lose face" in the eyes of others, especially those who really think. After all, one gets tired of being shown off by others, just as they would show off a new car for its glistening appearance and its shiny paint. I suggest that if you think your lack of good looks is holding you back, you'd better look a little deeper, for "beauty is only skin deep." Something much uglier than your face may be holding you back. Analyze your disposition, your attitude toward others, and ask yourself if you are really worthy of the friendship of others.

Just here I should like to nail another fallacy. A lot of high school students have the idea that they must spend a lot of money in order to be popular. Some are even led to use devious and unrighteous ways to obtain that money, when their parents cannot or will not furnish it. It is believed by many that one cannot be poor and still be liked. I deny that. Money has little at all to do with making the proper friends. And the friends that swarm around you for money are like the flies that gather around sugar. When the sugar is gone, so are they.

The prodigal son learned a good lesson about friends, but he learned it the hard way. He took all of his share of the estate and went into a far country. There he spent his money in riotous living. People fairly swarmed about him. He was popular and worshipped. Then his money ran out. His friends did the same thing. Finally, the once popular idol ended up in the pig-pen, so hungry that he envied the hogs the husks with which they stuffed their bellies. When you buy friends with money, they go "bye-bye" when your money does. When the cash gives out, they give up! Any friendship which must be continually replenished with essence of greenbacks is doomed to failure. So, don't make the mistake of thinking that because you are poor, you will make a poor friend. Some of the richest friendships in the world have been built around the poorest people.

We have talked long enough about what isn't really necessary to win those friends whom you crave. Now it is time to ask what is required. I propose to answer that with the wisdom of Solomon. It is given in a brief sentence, but that sentence sums up the whole question. Listen! "A man that hath friends must show himself friendly" (Proverbs 18:24). It's as simple as that! Are you one of those who sigh for friends? Do you feel that you are alone in the world? Do you blame the world for that? If you do, you are starting at the wrong place. The blame is within, not without. There's nothing wrong with others; the wrong is with you.

Have you ever really tried to be a friend to others? Have you shared the grief of another and tried to lift a burden from a weighted soul? Have you stopped to pick up a stumbling stone from a brother's path, or have you shut yourself inside a dark and gloomy castle of self-righteousness, never caring about the rest of humanity? Do you listen with interest about the little problems of

the one who sits at the next desk, or works at the next machine? Or do you consider everyone else on earth to be boresome and wish that they would never talk to you? Are you fed up with life because you are so full of yourself? Analyze your character and alter it as it is required.

If you've spent all your life finding fault with others, look within. Remove your own faults. Too many see the mote in a brother's eye, but cannot see the beam in their own. There are too many muckraking mote removers, and not enough beam beholders! There's a life of usefulness for you. Quit feeling sorry for yourself, and give your sympathy to others who really need it. You can have friends if you want them. Remember to always be a friend and you'll always have a friend. That's the teaching of the Bible!

## POISON DAGGERS

I recently read the experience of an explorer in the Brazilian jungles. Particularly interesting was the account which he gave of the hunting expeditions of the aborigines. These wild men are adept at the use of poisoned darts which are blown with great force from a long blow-gun or tube. He described the making of the poison into which the arrows or darts were dipped, and told how in certain strength it would immediately paralyze the victim, while in a weaker solution the poison worked more gradually and the victim literally died by degrees.

As I read, it came to me that God's Word often speaks of the lying and gossiping tongue as being a dart or arrow shooting forth. Sometimes one lie will transfix the unfortunate victim and completely ruin his character, though he may be innocent. At other times, an undercurrent of falsehoods and untruth, repeated over and over, will eventually paralyze his efforts and render his work ineffectual. The Scripture says, "The words of the tale-bearer are as wounds, and they go down to the innermost parts of the belly" (Proverbs 18:8). This simply means that such words can cause a deep wound which may never heal, and may even be fatal.

The power of the tongue to wound is an admitted fact. In speaking of a certain class of individuals, the God of Heaven declared that the poison of asps was under their lips (Romans 3:13). When you stop to consider that the asp referred to is the snake known by us as the cobra, the illustration becomes very fitting. The cobra is a serpent which can eject its poison with uncanny accuracy for a distance of ten or twelve feet. It is often called "the spitting cobra" because it spews forth its poison to blind the unfortunate person or animal who approaches it. Thus it is with those who are guilty of jealous gossip. The venom which they conjure up and eject is capable of destroying the one against whom it is directed. In spite of all the scriptural warnings upon this matter, perhaps the most common sin among us is that of gossiping to the injury of others.

The worst feature about loose talk is that it is easily put forth, but it is hard to recall. Perhaps you have heard how an ancient judge impressed this fact upon the mind of a woman who was brought before him on the charge of slander and circulating false rumors. He told her to go get a chicken, and to walk through the streets plucking feathers therefrom and casting them into the air where the wind could catch them. Then she was instructed to return to court. When she came back, the judge told her to go back over the identical route she had covered and pick up all of the feathers and come back with them carefully gathered. The woman was amazed at such a request, and pleaded the impossibility of fulfilling it. Then the magistrate pointed out to her that her gossip was exactly of the same nature; cast forth unthinkingly, it was caught up by the winds of malice and scattered to the far corners of the earth, and could never be called back in, even though the one who started it became utterly repentant.

It might be well for us to consider the motives and causes underlying this most common of all transgressions. The Bible teaches us that there are a lot of factors which contribute to it. It is commonly the result of not having a useful occupation to engage one's time and energy. "For we hear that there are some among you which walk disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies" (2 Thessalonians 3:11). Those who are really busy for the Lord have little time to spend in messing with other's affairs. They are utilizing their activities in constructive work for the Master. If you want to keep out of malicious mischief —

**KEEP BUSY.** It is still true that "an idle mind is the devil's workshop."

Most gossip is the result of an inferiority complex. Those who are guilty of it find themselves unable to cope with situations. They view others doing the things which they would like to have done, but never had the ability to do so. As they brood over this, they fancy that the other man must have an ulterior motive, and they project their own littleness upon him, and try to bring themselves up by pulling him down. The poorest way in the world to sell an article is by running another down. The poorest way to build your own character is by an attempt to destroy the character of another. You cannot climb to the heights by stepping upon other men. You only demonstrate your own sense of frustration, your degree of littleness and your sense of inability to cope with life.

Preachers often advertise to the world their own inability by attempting, upon imaginary evidence, to destroy the influence of others. I am willing to aid and assist every faithful preacher upon earth. If he has a greater ability than I possess, I will thank God for it. I will attempt to create new fields in which he may use it; I will try and put him forward even though it means I hold myself back. The Cause of the Lord is the only thing in all the world that counts, and besides that, we, like Paul, should count our own lives as nothing. Gossip would be forever banished from the earth if men would heed the admonition, "in honor preferring one another."

The apostle describes a certain group of people in this language, "And withal they learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house; and not only idle, but tattlers also and busybodies, speaking things which they ought not" (1 Timothy 5:13). What produces these symptoms for they are but indications of an underlying cause? The Book tells us in this same connection, when it declares, "Having damnation, because they have cast off their first faith" (1 Timothy 5:12). When you see members of the church who indulge in idleness, tattling, and sowing of discord, make up your minds that they have departed from the faith. You cannot retain faith in God and undermine your brethren.

Gossip is not a sign of intelligence. It is rather a proof of ignorance. The person who indulges therein is ignorant, disobedient and deceived. If you want to manifest the shallowness of your

brain, and the lack of knowledge which is your shame, turn your tongue loose, and the world will soon learn—not how much, but how little, you really know. It is better to let the world think that you are dumb than to open your mouth and prove it.

We have mentioned many of the things which contribute to idle talk, but there remains the one great underlying cause. Gossip originates in hell, is engendered by the devil, promoted by his demons, and is one of the most potent ways which Satan has of destroying the work of God. James candidly informs us, "And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity; so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and is set on fire of hell" (James 3:6). If you want to be a first-class agent of the devil, let him give you a course in gossip and slander. Take his training in gossip and rumor circulation, and you will have the satisfaction of knowing that you have helped to fill hell with some who might have been saved had you kept your tongue from evil, and your lips that they spake no guile.

You may ask what we should do when others insist on passing along information to create strife and breed ill-feeling. One man did this. A certain one came to him and asked him if he knew what someone was telling about him. He replied that he did not. "Don't you want to know?" the other asked. His reply was, "I don't care to hear it. If it's the truth I already know it; and if it's a lie it won't hurt me." That's a pretty good way to stop gossip—one to talk and the other to listen. You can kill it by heaping on too much coal, but the more fuel you add to wild talk the greater the conflagration. "Behold how great a matter a little fire kindleth" (James 3:5). The best way to kill the fire of gossip is to withhold fuel. It will soon go out.

It takes two to make a quarrel. It also takes two to foster gossip—one to talk and the other to listen, You can kill it by refusing to pass it on, or by refusing to listen when someone else wants to pass it on. Take all of the poison daggers out of circulation.

## PARTICULAR PARENTS

I recognize the fact that most people are not interested in statistics on any subject. Nothing so bores them as the reading off of a long list of figures. In public speaking classes we are always taught to avoid the idea of trying to support an argument with a lengthy reading of dry digits. Even hot news ceases to be entrancing when it concerns cold figures. But today I have some hot figures which may serve to knock a few of you cold. And I am going to read them to you.

There are cases in which people will listen to the reading off of a list of numbers. Those cases are always found when the person is directly involved in the reading. You'll remember how eagerly various ones sat at the radio when they were making the first drawings under the national conscription act. That was because when those numbers were droned out over the microphone, every person of draft age knew that his number might be next. We're concerned about figures which concern our lives. These figures concern your life, and it's about time you became concerned about them.

J. Edgar Hoover, Director of the FBI, says, "The postwar crime wave which we feared is upon us. It is mounting in intensity. It is growing in severity. It is not isolated. It is nationwide. In fact, other countries report similar experiences. View with me, if you will, the passing parade of crime. It presents a sordid spectacle. Out of each 1,000 marching in this endless parade, 521 have marched to a previous arrest, and 210 are under 21 years of age. More persons of 17 are arrested than in any other age group. Of each 1,000 murderers, 140 are under 21 years of age; of every 1,000 robbers, 360 are under 21; of burglars, 510; of thieves, 340; of arsonists, 250. Of 1,000 car thieves, 630 are under 21; and of rapists, 320 are under 21 years of age."

Truly that is a sorry and sordid commentary on modern life. With the greatest facilities in the world, with educational institutions, churches and social agencies functioning as never before, this nation is becoming one of crime and rapine. What is the

reason for it? Perhaps it would be well to ask the man who has his fingers on the crime pulse of the world, the same one who has just given us the figures cited. Mr. Hoover, what is the reason for the crisis in crime with which we are confronted? Listen!

"In the background of each lies a story of shocking neglect. Boys and girls are being deprived of the care and guidance necessary to the proper formation of their character. Their lawlessness had its roots in every instance in broken homes, in homes where mothers and fathers, because of their neglect, misunderstanding or irresponsibility, had failed in their primary obligation." Thus it can be seen that the condition we face today is one of parental, rather than juvenile neglect. America is paying the penalty for slothfulness in the rearing of her young.

Fields left to themselves grow up in briars and thistles; houses left to themselves decay and topple; characters left to themselves in the formative years become warped and unstable. There must be a return to the teaching of the Bible. There must be a respect for God engendered in our hearts or we are lost, eternally, irretrievably lost. There must be a respect for restraint, for discipline, for restricting influence, or we shall rush madly downstream until we are swept over in the Niagara of dissolution. And this must start in the home.

Parents must begin to tell their children what to do, instead of letting the children tell them what to do. There must be a return to the old-fashioned hickory switch over the door. Fathers may have to use their belts not only to hold up their own pants but also to warm those of their boys. I firmly believe that if a lot of this pussyfooting, mollycoddling, pampering and petting is cut out, and we wade into our offspring and let them know what's what and why, who's who and where, we may be able to make them kowtow, and now! I'm not advocating brutal punishment; all I'm recommending is an application of horse sense to the problem, and an application of a buggy whip to the seat of the problem child. If a lot of parents when they attend a parent-teacher meeting would spend their time advising the teachers to tan the hides of a bunch of their smart-aleck children, instead of wasting it listening to a sophisticated lecture by some long-haired, high-browed child culture specialist, we'd have a little more order in the schools and a little better children turned out by them.

Recently a youngster approaching his teen-age set fire to a schoolhouse at the noon hour. The teacher set fire to the seat of his breeches at one o'clock, and the board fired the teacher at six o'clock. They should have given her a medal for bravery and a lifetime contract. That's the kind of teacher I'd like to have my youngsters associate with in their school life.

I am sure that the Bible can be trusted to advise us in the rearing of our children. If we will obey its precepts, we will escape the calamity which is fast approaching. Mr. Hoover says, "This country is in deadly peril. We have won the war, but may still lose freedom for all in America. For a stealthy, creeping rot of moral and spiritual disintegration is eating into our nation."

The wisest earthly monarch who ever occupied a throne made this statement in Proverbs 19:18, "Chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying." There's a great deal in that verse. It contains a command, a time warning and an admonition. The command is positive. "Chasten thy son!" The father who does not chastise his children when they go wrong is a divine lawbreaker, and may train his sons up to become a breaker of all law.

There is warning given to the effect that chastisement might eventually be hopeless, that, even applied, it may do no good. It is to be administered while there is yet hope. I have no brief for those who say they cannot understand what has gotten into their children. Generally the things that get into them are the things we put into them. Children are most often what they are *now* because of what their parents were *then*.

I was in a home not long ago where a mother issued threats almost constantly. She said to her little boy, "Don't do this and don't do that! If you do I will whip you." If the boy heard her, he gave no indication of it. I said to the woman, "Is your youngster deaf?" She said, "No, he just doesn't pay any attention to me, that's all." It wasn't long until he got his mother's powder box down off the dresser and proceeded to powder her coat with it. He did a fair job, I thought. She grabbed a switch and made for him, and he started to cry. She dropped the switch and led him back to the dresser to put the powder back where he got it. She turned to me and said, "I just can't *stand* to whip him when he cries." I replied, "Then you'd better sit down and do it,

because if you don't whip him when you tell him you will, he might get the idea you are such a prevaricator he can't believe you in anything else."

When Solomon said, "Let not thy soul spare for his crying," he knew the tendency to become soft-hearted and soft-headed. Children should be treated with fairness, with justice, without partiality. We should point out to them early in life that the breaking of laws demands a penalty. If we let them get by with us, they will try to get by with others. If we permit them to trample our laws underfoot, they will trample God's laws underfoot.

Go to the insane asylums, the penitentiaries, the reform schools, the houses of penal correction. Look upon the sorry sights that are to be seen. Know then that here you view the results of the lack of training in youth and childhood. Where will your boy be tomorrow? You coddle him, pamper him, turn him loose, let him run without restraint, exercise no protection over him now. You are sowing to the wind; you'll reap the whirlwind of tears, sorrow and bitter remorse. "Be not deceived. God is not mocked. Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."

Too many people spoil the rod and spare the child, which is just as bad as sparing the rod and spoiling the child. It works both ways. If you neither spare nor spoil the rod, the chances are you'll neither spare nor spoil your child.

## SNAKES IN BOTTLES

Not long ago it was my privilege to speak on an assembly program to a high school group. After the speech, I was conducted on a tour of the various classrooms. I was especially interested in the General Science laboratory, where the class was working on dissection and preservation of various types of small animal life. There was an entire shelf of large bottles containing snakes and lizards, which were pickled in alcohol. I gazed upon those ghastly looking serpents coiled in the bottles and as I did the thought came to me that these were not the only snakes in bottles of alcohol. There are many others which, though invisible, are there just

the same. In this case it just happened that the snakes were "pickled."

The liquor interests are working overtime these days in their attempt to make you believe that there are no longer serpents in bottles. They have hired huge staffs of advertisers who receive millions of dollars per year to make gullible fools out of the American public. And these high-power salesmen of Satan's wares laugh up their sleeves every time they convince some unthinking ignoramus that "there's no harm in an occasional drink."

Honeyed phrases are now used to make it appear that liquor has all of a sudden become something worthwhile, and that you must drink to be sociable. One company suggests that you "discover why its delightful smoothness, its mellow, satisfying flavor are applauded by the most discriminating." Another says that its product is brighter, brisker, livelier . . . because it's unusually rich in the extra flavor that characterizes ale at its finest." Still another suggests, "For brighter parties . . . gracious host, smart company, exciting foods and Manhattans made with the whiskey that's smoother, lighter and richer than ever."

The men who are pictured pouring drinks are always toggled out in immaculate evening dress. They don't picture the bowery bums, the drunken sots, the bleary-eyed, bewhiskered, unkempt derelicts who sprawl on the sidewalks, brought down to their condition by the intoxicating fluid from the very same bottles so beautifully portrayed in the ads. Those ads don't dare tell the truth about the effect of liquor. After all, a man who can't stand up, who can't talk intelligibly, is not a very genial host. Nor is one very discriminating who wallows around in his own vomit.

All of the high-sounding, glibly-turned phrases will not disguise the nature of the product. It is rightfully called whis-KEY, for it has the key to misery, sorrow and remorse; to murder, lust and rapine. It has the key that opens the way for admittance to jail, to asylum, to cemeteries. It has the key that will whisk you from a good-paying job to a place in the gutter; from a sober family man, beloved and respected in the community, to a disgrace and shame to all who know you. And the word "ale" needs to be spelled a-i-l, for it's the secret of what ails many a man in the world today, holding him down, defeating his every move toward higher things.

Modern saloons are called "cocktail lounges." They have gorgeous draperies, polished bars, attractive furniture, outstanding paintings and unique decorative effects. But the same old stuff is in the bottles on the shelf; the same old serpent lingers there, waiting with opened mouth to dart his fangs into the unwary. Dressing up the atmosphere does not change the effect, any more than painting a house of prostitution will change the character of the inmates.

Liquor is now sold by approximately 450,000 outlets, retailing directly to the consumer. In other words, almost half a million places are selling this brain poison. There is one retail liquor license for every 300 residents of this nation. There are eleven saloons for every five churches, and in this area the ratio is a lot greater. The old devil has been pretty busy getting his places built, and securing the best locations, hasn't he? For every 71 homes through the United States, there is a tavern or bar, flaunting its wares before young and old alike. In 1939, America spent for liquor the sum total of \$3,228,491,968. Yes, that's billions!

In that same year, the per capita cost of liquor was about \$24.64, and that means enough money was spent for drinking that it would have cost each man, woman and child \$24.64, had they been assessed their part. Perhaps you think that you did not pay your part of the cost of liquor because you do not drink. Don't be silly! In addition to the above figures, you must add the cost of crime caused by liquor. Think of the courts working overtime taking the testimony of murder cases, where the killing was done as the result of liquor. You paid your share for that, didn't you? You have to pay taxes to maintain a police force, a state patrol force, a Federal Bureau of Investigation, judges, courts, penitentiaries, reform schools, all of which could be reduced in number if it were not for alcohol.

The total national consumption of legally sold intoxicants in 1939 was 1,822,086,306 gallons. If all the liquor consumed in that year had been placed in gallon sorghum buckets, and the buckets been set down touching each other, they would have reached around the earth eight times, and there would have been enough of them left to make a bridge from St. Louis to Salt Lake City, Utah. If those buckets had been set one on top of the other, they would have reached a height of almost 205,000 miles. That's a lot of swill to pour down the throats of America, isn't it?

According to the Bible, there are a lot of unwise people on this old earth. I want to read you a little bit of wisdom which may help you to know that even the ancients recognized the folly of drinking liquor. Listen to Solomon. "Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging; and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise" (Proverbs 20:1). In spite of all the modern ads so deceptively prepared, so gorgeously presented, that still holds true. Instead of the slogan, "You've made a name for yourself as a thoughtful, gracious host," the advertisement should read, "You've made a fool of yourself; a thoughtless, ungracious host." I saw a sign the other day which said, "American gentlemen who think first, drink So-and-So," and I thought that it's a dead cinch they'd better think first, for they won't be able to do it after they down a slug of that human rat poison. About the only real true advertisement is the one which says, "The best in bonds." That's what you'll be if you let it get a hold on you!

Listen to Solomon again! "Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his color in the cup, when it moveth itself aright. At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder" (Proverbs 23:31,32). *Snakes alive!* What would your friends think if you handed each one of them a writhing, twisting copperhead when they first stepped in your door? Well, they'll get the same effect out of what some of you do hand them, but it just takes the poison a little longer to work is all.

I went to an Indian powwow once when we were out west. Curiosity prompted me to go up to one campfire to see what they were cooking. In this instance, it happened to be a blacksnake which was being roasted over the fire for consumption later. I declined the invitation to remain and eat with them, and suddenly remembered that I had an appointment elsewhere at the very time they were getting ready to eat. A lot of the rest of you would have done just as I did, but you'll turn around and empty a bottle, and then see the very snakes that I've been telling you about. How silly for grown men to depend upon such a mental crutch, which only tends to deaden their sensibilities, like the bite of a serpent!

No nation has ever survived which engaged in a drunken spree. No nation can survive under such conditions. The future demands clear and sober thinking. We face the possibilities of destruction at our own hands. It is indeed a fearful thing to know

that the secret of the atomic bomb may be in the hands of those who in a moment of loose-tongued drunkenness may spill the secret which will result in universal devastation. If ever there was a demand for sanity, for sobriety, for clear-headed reasoning, that time is now. Let us preach against intoxicants. Let us warn our children of their evil effects. Let us continually point out to all about us that drinking and misery go hand-in-hand.

## AN IMAGINARY MENAGERIE

Isn't it peculiar how people will offer excuses to keep from doing the things which they know they ought to do? I am sure that a lot of them must work their imagination overtime in order to conceive of some of the trivial, trifling, nonsensical ideas which they put forward to keep from going to church.

I remember, once we had a mad dog scare in the little town where we lived. I'll confess that, like most boys, I was always ready to seize upon any pretense to stay away from school. The rumor got to circulating around that a rabid dog had bitten some cattle, and that it had been seen darting furtively down an alley in town. By the time that tale got to the school, it had grown until it was being reported that a dozen or more dogs were wreaking havoc upon the community, and that all citizens were being warned to stay off the streets. When I went home that evening, I ran all of the entire distance, every step of the way I felt the hot breath of a mad dog against my back.

The next morning when school time came, I announced rather proudly and with a great deal of firmness that I did not think I would attend school that day. It was a little difficult to get by anything with my parents and I had to offer a plausible reason. I promptly affirmed that the street was no doubt full of mad dogs, and that anyone who sent his unsuspecting child out under such circumstances was merely condemning him to a certain and horrible death. I made the mistake of arguing the point a little too long, and when I did get to school, I hardly felt like sitting down. I would rather have stood up.

Since I've grown older, I have learned that I am not the only

one who thought he could escape duty by imagining wild animals roaming at large, and who therefore confined himself to his home on that basis. I want you to hear what Solomon said in Proverbs 22:13, "The slothful man saith, There is a lion without, I shall be slain in the streets." Anyone knows that lions are not commonly seen prowling around the main thoroughfares of a city in broad daylight. However, a slothful, negligent individual has to think up some excuse, and making a plea of safety for his life is about as good as any, although he has to dream up a wild tale to justify his action.

You'd be surprised how many people dream up harmful consequences which they profess will overtake them if they go to church. There are a lot of lions in the streets today, to hear them tell it. I've heard various ones declare that they would just love to come to church. Then they conclude by saying "But." A lot of folks are going to "but" themselves clear out of heaven if they don't watch out. They'll say, "Yes, I'd just dearly love to be with you, brethren, *but* I'm afraid it is going to rain, and if it did, I'd probably get wet, and I'd be almost sure to take a cold, and it would go into pneumonia, and I'd have to be taken to a hospital, and placed under an oxygen tent, and I know that it wouldn't help me, and I'd be certain to die, and you know I have my family to look after. I just can't take any chances." One might place a little confidence in that kind of story if he did not see those same persons out on Monday going shopping in a driving rain. They are lazy and have invented a lion in the street.

Not long ago, a man told me that he would give anything to be able to go to church regularly, but he said he was afraid to come because there were so many accidents now. He gave me a long, lurid list of cripples and deaths that he had read about, and finished by saying, "I've just made up my mind to stay off the streets and highways altogether, and not risk my life." Before we got through talking, his nephew came along and invited him to take a two hundred mile drive to the country, and they arranged to go the following Friday. Wouldn't it be much better just to come out and tell the truth, saying, "I know that I ought to go to church, and I realize that I'm serving the devil, and going to hell, and dragging my family down to perdition, but I'm just so contemptibly lazy that I don't care." I believe I would appreciate that a lot more than the fictional lions which are vainly supposed to be lurking around every street corner, or sitting under

the street lights, licking their chops, waiting for some churchgoer to come along so they can pounce upon him and gnaw his bones.

It's a funny thing to me how the decay of one faculty seems always to give rise to the activity and functioning of another. Just as soon as industry goes down, imagination comes up. The indifferent man tries to make up in speculation what he lacks in energy. One who really loves the Lord is too busy doing what God has said, to think up excuses to do otherwise. The Lord always calls a busy man; the devil always calls a lazy man.

The worst feature about inventing lions is that finally they become real to you. You've heard about the old gentleman who never saw a bear, but who related so often how he had killed one, that he finally got to believing it, and undertook to show some visitors its hide tacked on the barn, haven't you? These things become fact to you even though they remain fiction to others. And there's no use of anyone trying to reason with a lion surmiser. I have tried that. I went to a man's house in an attempt to get him to church. He looked very comfortable and quite happy as he sat there in a rocking chair, watching his wife mow the lawn. He told me that he thought of the congregation often.

I asked him if he could come back to worship. He told me that he could not walk that far, that the eight blocks just simply killed him on account of the rheumatism. I mentioned that I had seen him at the post office a few days before. He quickly told me that one of the girls had taken him in her car. Just as quickly, I told him that we would drive by and pick him up the following night for prayer meeting. But he told me that he could not stand to ride in the night air. I told him we'd get him on Sunday morning. He then told me that the heat was so great around noon that he didn't dare venture out. I tried to show him that his health was in no danger, that he was seeing imaginary consequences. I even told him I thought it would do him good to get away from home and go to church. He put on a pained look, as if something were just getting ready to kill him, and said, "Brother, you just don't know how I suffer." The following week I saw him at a lunch stand, suffering untold agony, placing nickels in a pinball machine.

The reason a lot of you do not serve God is because you do not want to serve Him. If the service requires that you get up off the stool of "do-nothing" and climb into the seat of "Do-

something," you immediately begin to draw back and invent excuses for not living up to your responsibility. I've seen men who actually shunned responsibility, and dreaded the battle of living until they became paralyzed, helpless cripples. They found it easier to face a life of lying in bed, with others taking the responsibility to provide for them, than to face life like it must be lived if we conquer it. You can take a negative attitude until your whole life will become negative. You can say "I can't" until you actually cannot.

Do not let your spiritual initiative wane. Snap out of it and get to work for God. You who lie abed on Lord's Day and keep your children from the House of God, get up and go to church. I knew one mother who kept her little girl out of church for several years because she was afraid that she would take some child disease, and that youngster had all of them—mumps, measles, chicken pox, smallpox and scarlet fever after she started to school. Her mother was afraid of the lions in the street. She might as well have brought the youngster to church to grow up in the Bible class with other boys and girls.

If you are one of those slothful souls who visualize mythical monsters, forget all about these dream dragons, visionary vultures, fantastic figments of an overworked mind, and center your mind on the tasks that are at hand. It is evident that in the last day you'll not get by with some improvised excuse. There's no lion in the street, but you may be lying in your heart. If you have a justifiable excuse, you can get by; if not, you'll be condemned in the last day.

## 'DON'T FENCE ME IN'

A lot of you are familiar with the rather popular western song which was going the rounds a few weeks ago, the title of which was, "Don't Fence Me In." That little ditty is characteristic of the attitude of a great many who congratulate themselves that they are modern, and who are anxious to exercise a freedom or liberty which degenerates into license to do what they please. There is a distinct tendency today to want to jump the fence on

all matters of custom and convention, and even to ignore the restraints of God's own law as pertains to morals and religion.

Those who flatter themselves that such an attitude is modern are ignorant in their sophistication. There isn't anything new about a desire or inclination to override the restrictions which God has placed around our lives. Such a position dates back to Cain, and has been characteristic of every lawbreaker from his day until now. Men and women have always wanted to be broader than God permits and society demands. They want to tear away the bars which hold them in and live to suit themselves, regardless of the effect that it may have upon others and the world.

When Jehovah gave Israel the land of Canaan by conquest, he divided it between the various tribes and among all of the families thereof. Inasmuch as this dividing was at the bidding of and under the supervision of God, it was a matter of divine record. To guarantee the perpetuity of the border lines, it was decided that landmarks should be set up. It was expected that these would always be visible and thus provide a way of checking up on the original plat. These landmarks were generally piles of stones. They were set up at the corners of the heritage, and anyone could thus determine the boundary of the field.

Later, greed seems to have entered in, and there were some who moved these landmarks. One could take a pile of stones, and by setting it over a few feet he could gain a great deal more farming territory. Naturally, he gained it at another's loss. However, such injustice never seems to affect one who has made up his mind to ignore God's boundary lines. He thinks only of himself and the immediate gain which he is to derive from his conduct. God issued a warning in Proverbs 22:28, "Remove not thy ancient landmark, which thy fathers have set."

Remove not the ancient landmark! There's a lesson for all of us in that. During the years, through their experience and in conjunction with the will of God, our forefathers have set landmarks to guide those of us who come after. These have been set at the cost of blood and great toil for our protection. Let us think carefully before we disturb them and go wild after a newly-sought freedom. I want to consider some of the ancient landmarks which are being disturbed today.

There are ancient landmarks of *modesty*. Society demands that

we conduct and dress ourselves in a manner that is becoming. Today those restraints and restrictions are being hurled into oblivion. With a resentment born of contemptible ignorance, there are those who assert that they can dress the way they please and it's no one's business but their own. Women appear upon the street with their bodies exposed, presenting a subtle encouragement to every rapist to attack them. I am not alone in what I say. A famous judge in Chicago only a very few weeks ago had on trial a young man who had formerly shown criminal tendencies.

The boy had been paroled to a family who had a daughter. He was now on trial for his relations with that daughter. The judge in his speech of sentence declared that the girl's parents were responsible for the act, inasmuch as they had permitted their daughter to dress in such scanty raiment that she presented more of a temptation than the normal adolescent youth could overcome. The jurist declared that if she dressed at home as she did for her appearance in court, he could understand why she had been seduced. He further declared that her attempt to pull down her dress sufficiently to cover her body was noteworthy and commendable, but only served to accentuate the brevity of the garment, and the impossibility of making it do what it was never intended to do. There's a solemn and decidedly saddening warning there for all today. When you remove the ancient landmarks of decency and modesty, you are preparing for a harvest of tears and broken hearts.

In *domestic relations*, there has been a modern wave of dereliction and departure from the restrictions of God's Word. Almost every "Advice for the Lovelorn" column in the daily newspaper carries the story of husbands and wives who are philandering, and stepping out with others. In some cases, an agreement is reached by mutual consent that both husband and wife can have dates with others, and that without interference by the other marital partner. God's law has not changed. It is unchanging and unchangeable.

The words of Christ are plain. "Whosoever looketh upon a woman to lust after her in his heart, hath committed adultery with her in his heart." It is true that you can throw those bars down and gallop off in newly attained freedom, but you cannot keep from paying the penalty in the Great Roundup in the skies. When the brand of adultery is fixed upon you and you are cast

into the lake of fire, you'll be fenced in where you can't get out. I suggest to you that you had better get behind the fence of God's Word and stay there here on earth. You'll save yourself a great deal of anguish and misery later on.

I resent the fact that Hollywood with its false glamour and its sickly romanticism has so tinged the thinking of the world that people now divest themselves of their partners as they do of an old garment, throwing one off when they get tired of it in order to get another which they think they'll like a little better. Some of the modern "stars" have had four and five husbands. And to cap it all off, they have emphasized sex appeal until a lot of people think that is the only basis of a happy union. In their maddening desire to keep up with the times they sing, "Don't Fence Me In" and proceed at once to kick over the traces.

The modern trend is even found in *religion*. It is thought to be a sign of intellectual attainment today to scoff at the virgin birth of the Lord Jesus. Recently the General Board of Evangelism of the Methodist Church brought out a new youth publication which they called "The New Life Magazine." Two pages in each issue are devoted to Personal Counseling, and the one doing the advising is Dr. Werner. In the May 25 (1946) issue a reader asked, "Is belief in the virgin birth necessary to full salvation?" The counselor stated, "I don't think that belief necessary to full salvation. Matthew in his gospel designates Joseph as the father of Jesus." Thus you see what kind of tripe is being fed to the youth of some of the churches.

It is a matter of record that a great many preachers in this city discount the miracles of Jesus. Occasionally they try to explain them by some natural occurrence, in which they strive to make the divine recorder an ignorant nincompoop or a plain, unvarnished liar. Usually they just set them down as being folk tales which got into circulation, were magnified into miracles in the eyes of superstitious people, and which have been handed down to us today, to be accepted on the same basis as the story of Rumpelstiltskin, Jack and the Beanstalk, or The Three Blind Mice.

The church, the spiritual body of Christ on earth, is laughed at in derision today. Just as the motley mob who crucified Him stood there at the feet of His earthly body and mocked Him, saying, "Come down off the cross and save Thyself," there are those

who stand before the spiritual body and declaim, "There's no salvation in the church. One can be saved just as well out of it as in it." Sacred things are treated lightly. Blasphemy is upon many lips. Hearts are full of cursing and bitterness. Feet are swift to run to mischief. The ancient landmarks of purity and righteousness have been pulled up by the roots and hurled away by sensual, worldly individuals.

Remember that there is a judgment coming. In that day you'll be judged by God's Word. All of the ancient landmarks will be back in place and then those who have not remained within them will have a sad and dreary day.

## A GOOD BUY — A BAD SALE

This is not a commercial program! We would far rather give away things than to sell them. However, I've got something I want you to buy today. It is not obtainable free. You have to purchase it. When you do buy it, and I trust that all of you will, I want you never to sell it. It's a good buy, but it's a poor sale. It's worth more than anything else to you when you buy it, and if you ever lose it, you'll have lost everything that's worthwhile.

Perhaps I'd better tell you just how precious this commodity is, before I attempt to get you to purchase it. I can best illustrate its value with a story. Suppose you were in the hands of a cruel and vindictive enemy, suffering untold torture and anguish day and night. What would you give to obtain your freedom? What would you offer as a ransom? I've known of men to pay out a hundred thousand dollars for freedom from a kidnapper. I've heard of those who would forfeit almost any earthly possession to obtain liberty when they had been captured in time of conflict. Men will endure anything, if they believe that liberty can be secured thereby. The thing I want you to buy will guarantee your liberty for all time to come.

How much do you value knowledge? What would you give for a complete college education? Some of you would give virtually any earthly wealth if by so doing you could immediately have the cultural advantages of a good education. I knew a boy

once who was so anxious to get all of the schooling he could obtain that he lived in a garret and ate bread crusts, in order to be close to a school where he could study under competent teachers. Think of Abraham Lincoln lying on his stomach in front of a fireplace, working problems on a wood shovel, using a piece of charcoal for a crayon. Think of him walking through the snow for five miles to borrow a book, and then splitting rails to pay for the book when it was ruined while in his possession. The thing I want you to buy today will secure for you a knowledge that is superior to that which you can gain in Harvard, Yale or any other university.

By this time you are undoubtedly saying, "That will leave me out. I do not have the money to purchase anything so expensive as that." Hold on! No one has mentioned money. The thing I want you to buy today is too valuable to sell for mere money. You do not need a cent to obtain it! It is invaluable in life, but yet it cannot be purchased with silver and gold. All of the money in the Federal Reserve Bank could not buy this commodity.

What, then, is it that will secure absolute freedom and will guarantee to one a knowledge surpassing that to be obtained in college? What is it that cannot be bought with money, yet is worth more than all of the money in the world? Listen to Proverbs 23:23, "Buy the TRUTH, and sell it not." The truth is what I want you to obtain today. Are you disappointed in this article? Do you say that you cannot see how it will guarantee you liberty and freedom?

Jesus said, "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." The freedom which comes from knowing the truth is one that you can have at all times, in all places. Even if you are chained in prison, you can still have freedom, if you know the truth. "Our fathers chained in prisons dark, were still in heart and conscience free." When Paul stood before King Agrippa with the chains clanking about his ankles, Paul was a free man, but Agrippa with no chains visible was in bondage.

Perhaps you ask how this truth can produce knowledge that surpasses any other. I reply that many graduates of internationally famous universities are still in ignorance because they do not know the truth. They are carrying on a relentless, untiring search

for it, but they are doomed to disappointment, because they are looking for it where it is not.

William Lyon Phelps, Professor of English Literature at Yale, in the introduction to his book, "Human Nature in the Bible," says, "I thoroughly believe in a university education for both men and women; but I believe a knowledge of the Bible without a college course is more valuable than a college course without the Bible. For, in the Bible we have profound thought beautifully expressed; we have the nature of boys and girls, of men and women, more accurately charted than in the works of any modern novelist or playwright."

It is God's will that we shall come to the truth, and thus to the greatest knowledge the world affords. In 1 Timothy 2:4 we read, "This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who will have all men to be saved to come unto the knowledge of the Truth." We should be willing to say

*Teach me the truth, Lord, though it put to flight  
My cherished dreams and fondest fancy's play;  
Give me to know the darkness from the light,  
The night from day.*

*Teach me the truth, Lord, though my heart may break  
In casting out the falsehood for the true;  
Help me to take my shattered life and make  
Its actions new.*

*Teach me the truth, Lord, though my feet may fear  
The rocky path that opens out to me;  
Rough it may be, but let the way be clear  
That leads to Thee.*

*Teach me the truth, Lord. When false creeds decay,  
When man-made dogmas vanish with the night,  
Then, Lord, on Thee my darkened soul shall stay,  
Thou living Light.*

It may be that you cannot understand how the truth must be bought, and yet no money is required. I want to prove, first of all, that in coming to God, one's bankroll is not taken into consideration. The old prophet Isaiah long years ago proclaimed, "Ho, everyone that thirsteth, come ye to the waters and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and

milk without money and without price." In the final chapter of the Bible, the invitation is extended to "Whosoever will, let him come and take of the waters of life freely," which means without charge or money.

One should not be misled, though, and think that because it does not take money to buy the truth, that the truth can be taken without purchase. The command is to BUY the truth. When a thing is bought, the indication is that you must exchange for it something which is of value, or at least, something which you have formerly considered to be valuable. So it is that when you buy the truth, you may have to give up those who are dear to you. Sometimes it costs you the love of a father or mother. Sometimes it costs you all of the friends you have previously made.

The cost is often too much for some. They know that a purchase of the truth means a renunciation of all of the false values of life. They must cancel their worldly pleasures, must give up their sensual habits, must renounce much of what they formerly held very dear. They are not willing to do that, so they continue along in ignorance and slavery, without the truth. When the merchant seeking goodly pearls found one of great price, he went and sold all that he had and bought it. He knew that the one pearl was worth more than everything he had accumulated in a lifetime. So it is with the goodly pearl of truth. Many discover it, but are not willing to pay the price.

When you have bought the truth, the admonition is to "sell it not." You can never get value received for it in anything else. The man who places truth on the bargain counter and permits it to be auctioned off for the baubles in the devil's booth is foolish indeed. You only give up that for which there is no comparison, for something that will turn out to be dross.

*"At the devil's booth are all things sold,  
Each ounce of dross costs its ounce of gold."*

Judas Iscariot had the truth. He sold it, and the thirty pieces of silver burned his itching palm until he cast it from him in fear and agony. A great many today are like Esau. They sell their birthright for a mere mess of pottage. Sometimes they do so because it seems to them that error always triumphs, and truth will never win. But we should remember the truth in the poem—

*“Truth forever on the scaffold,  
Wrong forever on the throne—  
Yet that scaffold sways the future,  
And, behind the dim unknown,  
Standeth God within the shadow,  
Keeping watch above His own.”*

Whatever it costs you today—buy the Truth! Whatever it costs you tomorrow—hold on to the Truth. It is all that counts. Get it, keep it, guard it, pass it on to your children and your children’s children. It is the greatest purchase you can ever make. It is worth more to you than the whole world. “Buy the Truth, and sell it not.”

## DIVINE CANDLE SNUFFING

A short time back I was talking to a young fellow whose first name was James. Since everyone called him Jim, I shall refer to him that way. He was a junior in high school, and a member of the church. We were riding along in his car, as he was taking me to another city to make a special address. The subject worked around somehow, until we were discussing the conduct of those who are in high school. Jim broke in with the observation, “I don’t think you gain anything by trying to live right. The world’s against that idea now and you might as well go along in the swim.”

I told him to elaborate further on the subject. So he resumed by saying that a lot of the fellows in high school boasted about their misdeeds, the petting parties they were on, the liquor they drank and the cigarettes they consumed. He insisted that they were among the most popular and that there was nothing to be gained in life by being a “killjoy.” I found that he had seriously considered giving up his religious convictions and going with the gang.

It wasn’t a week after that until I talked with Mary. She was the sixteen-year-old daughter of the family with which I was staying while delivering a series of lectures. I had just given one the night previously on the topic, “Making Life Count.” In that I

had stressed the necessity of cleanliness in every department of existence. I emphasized that we should keep our bodies clean by regular bathing; we should keep our minds clean by concentration on worthwhile things; we should keep our morals clean by refusing to indulge in those things which were harmful to our well-being.

While I was writing letters the next day, Mary came in and said she would like to disagree with some of the things I had said. I gave her that privilege, of course, and asked her to state what it was, and why the disagreement on the matter. She told me that she had been reared by strict parents. They still would not let her dance; she had never played a game of cards, and she did not know what liquor tasted like. But she stated that it had never gotten her anywhere. The rest of the girls her age had plenty of boy friends. She had none. She insisted that boys didn't like to go out with a "dead stick." They wanted a girl who would smoke with them, drink with them, and, in short, go all the way with them. Mary declared she was pretty tired of always being told that she couldn't do this and couldn't do that, and she was ready to leave.

Jim and Mary were both inexperienced in life. They thought that they had arrived at the place where they knew from observation what it took to make a success. Both of them thought their parents were old-fashioned. They were sadly mistaken. Adolescent youth is easily stampeded by group pressure. They have so little experience in what it really takes to make life, and so few accomplishments to show for their stay on earth that they think they must ape what some popular fellow or girl is doing if they ever expect to be admired.

Instead of asserting leadership, and showing executive ability in setting the style, they fall headlong into the rush to do what some other individual is doing to secure notice. If the popular boy in the class wears blue jeans, it isn't long until every member of the class is wearing blue jeans. If the outstanding football hero ties his tie with a certain knot, every little sheep in the flock must immediately begin to experiment in copying that knot. If the girl who is nominated as queen wears a certain hair-do, or uses a special kind of perfume, every other girl has to have her hair fixed that way, and she positively stinks unless she has on that brand or blend of perfume.

Such inexperienced youngsters do not know that the world notices the man who is different. Leaders have always been those who have been different than the mob. It is a sign of juvenile thinking to do what the crowd does, without employing reason or logic to determine whether the crowd behavior is wise. The fathers and mothers who oppose drinking and cigarette smoking are modern. They show a sense of reasoning power characteristic of good breeding and education. It is wisdom to analyze a thing. It is smart to determine whether a thing is good or bad. It is never wisdom to be led blindly by someone else.

Anyone who thinks drinking alcohol is modern is either misinformed or ignorant. Noah got drunk after he came out of the ark. Belshazzar was in a drunken stupor the night he lost his kingdom. Alexander the Great drank himself into the grave by his excesses. There's nothing up-to-date about imbibing liquor or making a human slop-bucket out of yourself. I want you young fellows in high school to know that when you drink and smoke, you're as old-fashioned as Noah and Sir Walter Raleigh. Why don't you really wake up? Why not read the findings of modern psychologists and medical men, and realize that you're only showing your juvenile lack of good sense when you refuse to heed their warnings and do as the gang does?

Jim and Mary not only were mistaken about what it took to be popular, but they were also indulging in the dangerous pastime of envying the wicked. It is foolish to do that, because history teaches all who will read that the wicked come to no good end. Look and learn—and live! God's Word says, "Be sure your sin will find you out." It says again, "Be not deceived, God is not mocked. Whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap." It repeats the true adage, "The way of the transgressor is hard." I want to read you a proverb which has had a salutary effect upon my life. It deserves the careful consideration of all of us.

"Fret not thyself because of evil men, neither be thou envious at the wicked; for there shall be no reward to the evil man; the candle of the wicked shall be put out" (Proverbs 24:20). Do you fret because the wicked seem to prosper? Are you envious of the good times that they seem to have? I'll admit, and the Bible teaches that a lot of just people suffer terribly, while at the same time the wicked appear to have everything their own way. I want to read from Ecclesiastes 7:15, "There is a just man that perisheth

in his righteousness, and there is a wicked man that longeth his life in his wickedness." Once more in Chapter 8:14, "There is a vanity which is done upon the earth; that there be just men, unto whom it happeneth according to the work of the wicked; again, there be wicked men to whom it happeneth according to the work of the righteous: I said that this also is vanity."

I want to know the conclusion of the wise man as to this apparent unfairness and injustice in life. Here it is: "Though a sinner do evil a hundred times, and his days be prolonged, yet surely I know that it will be well with them that fear God, which fear before Him; but it shall not be well with the wicked, neither shall He prolong his days, which are as a shadow; because he feareth not before God." It pays to do right. It pays every day. It pays every step of the way. It pays in the long run. It pays in the Judgment.

The life and influence of the wicked, like a candle, will be put out. They are temporary, burning brightly for a little season even as they consume the one who produces that tiny flame. In order for a candle to make its light, it has to consume itself. In order for the wicked to shine in their popular days, they must consume themselves. They consume their bodies and make out of them stinking tombs with their evil habits; they consume their minds by the results of the excesses in which they indulge; they eat away their consciences, and, like a cancerous growth, sin defiles their spirits. The candle of the wicked will be put out. There's no question about it!

In order to race in a high school track meet you have to conform to the rules. Those who disobey the rules will lose out. They will not be given the reward at the end. It is true they may enter and run valiantly and hard, but if they violate the rules, the judge will rule them out. So it is with the race of life. Jesus is the judge. He has formulated the rules. Those who disobey may make a great show at the start. But it's the finish that counts in a race. That's also true of the race of life. The proverb declares, "There shall be no reward to the evil man." I believe that!

Play the game fair. Play it according to the rules. By and by, if you persist, you will win the great reward for which everyone

should strive. Do not be moved by those about you. Assert yourself. Be a leader. Don't be content just to be led.

*In the world's broad field of battle,  
In the bivouac of life;  
Be not like dumb, driven cattle,  
Be a hero in the strife.*

## BROKEN DOWN CITIES

All students of history have heard of the fame of Alexander the Great. The son of Philip of Macedon, this young man was possessed of brilliant natural gifts. These were further developed under the influence and tutelage of the great thinker and logician, Aristotle. His personal beauty, with its ardent expressiveness and flashing eyes, was very remarkable, and he was eminent for his manners of charming grace and affability.

Alexander ascended the throne upon the death of his father, before he was 20 years of age. In the thirteen short years remaining to him, he was destined like a flaming meteor to sweep across the world horizon, and to bring all nations trembling, to bow at his feet. At the age of 21, he had conquered Thebes; by the time he was 25, Babylon had fallen to his power. When the great leader of the Persians came against him with a million infantry, 40,000 cavalry, 200 scythed chariots and 15 elephants, Alexander met the formidable host with only 47,000 soldiers. In the ensuing encounter the Persians were decisively beaten on October 1, 331. Eight years afterwards, this mighty young monarch arrived at the site of Babylon. Envoys from every nation in the civilized world were present to pay their tribute and homage unto him. He stood triumphant over all mankind.

Still full of plans for the future, Alexander in the midst of a drunken orgy fell ill. He took to his bed, never to rise again. Because of a false rumor, the day before he ended his earthly sojourn, he caused the entire army to pass by his royal bed. He waved a feeble hand to all and thus gave them his farewell. The mighty conqueror of the earth went the way of all the earth. He had conquered the world, but could not conquer himself. He paid with death for his moral excesses and his intemperance. He could rule others, but could not rule his own life. He is a sad reminder

to us that a great many possess qualities of leadership unsurpassed, but if such are only used externally, they profit but little.

I want you to notice with me a solemn statement as found in Proverbs 25:28, "He that hath no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down, and without walls." What an apt picture of the one who cannot control his desires! Walls were placed around ancient cities in order to assure protection for them. When those walls crumbled and fell, the cities were in constant danger. Every passing group might be an enemy, and there was no defense against encroachment. Capture and degradation might come at any time, and from any quarter.

You've known men like broken down cities which had no walls. So weak were they from having given way to their appetites and desires that they had no resistance left. I know one man who has a passion for intoxicating liquor and who, through the years, has filled his body with alcoholic poison. I've seen him with tear-dimmed eyes come to church, and acknowledge his wrong and promise to live a better life. Then, in some moment of weakness while passing a tavern, he would apparently be overcome, and before he knew what had happened, he was lying in a drunken stupor on the street, a spectacle of shame to himself, and a disgrace to the church. A broken down city!

I know another who has tried hard, according to his testimony, to quit the cigarette habit. He was informed by his physician that he would have to cut out smoking, or endanger his life. He would discard cigarettes altogether for a period of a few days, then someone in the crowd would light one, and the odor of burning tobacco would be wafted into his nostrils. The desire surged back into his veins, and he became weak and trembling. Perhaps he was fully resolved to overcome, but he became like putty in the hands of the habit which he had tightened around his own body, and soon he lapsed into the unrestricted use of tobacco again. This man is one possessed of leadership ability. He is a good planner, a good executive, but he is a broken down city without walls. He can control others, but cannot control himself.

Self-mastery is the one thing that should be desired above all others in the world. We read books on how to influence others, how to get them to do what we wish. We should far rather concentrate on how to influence our souls to obey God, and how to

become well-pleasing in His sight. Many of us have permitted the enemy to come in and batter down our defenses, leaving us without protection and without hope. We need to rebuild the wall of confidence and trust, that we may be conquerors. How shall we do it?

When the walls of Jerusalem were battered down and the city was broken and waste, Nehemiah heard of it. Listen to his reaction. "And it came to pass, when I heard these things, that I sat down and wept, and mourned certain days, and fasted, and prayed before the God of heaven." That's the way to start out to rebuild the walls of character. Take it to the Lord in prayer. Go penitently, contritely, weeping and broken for your weakness. Realize your true condition. There's no use attempting to conquer by yourself. Let God help.

After Nehemiah confessed his sin to God, and prayed for aid, he got up and started out to do something to help answer his prayer. So must you do the same. When he arrived at Jerusalem, he first made a survey of just what he had to do. He says, "I arose in the night . . . and went out by night by the gate of the valley . . . and viewed the walls of Jerusalem, which were broken down, and the gates thereof were consumed with fire." Know what your task is. Don't flatter yourself that it is easy to build again a lost character, or even to gain the firmness that you need. Analyze the work. Everything that is worth doing is worth doing well.

Call upon your brethren to aid you. They can be of assistance to you and will gladly do all that is within their power. Nehemiah said to those about him, "Ye see the distress we are in . . . let us build up the wall, that we be no more a reproach." Yes, friends, those who have no mastery of their lives are a reproach unto God. If a man cannot control his temper, his appetite, his tongue, his steps, he is a reproach. That reproach can only be removed when he builds up a barrier against it. He must erect the walls of pure living and strong faith.

Certainly there will be enemies. What man ever turned from evil to do good who did not make enemies? There were enemies of Nehemiah, too. As soon as they saw he was determined to finish building the wall, they laughed him to scorn. It is recorded that one of them said, "Even that which they build, if a fox go

up, he shall break down their stone wall." How often, when a man starts out to do right, someone will say, "Yes, he's making a brave start, but you just wait until he passes a saloon," or, "Just wait until he gets with the gang and see how long he lasts."

I like the way Nehemiah handled that. He did not stop and argue or jeer at those who were sneering at his efforts. Instead, he went to God with it and said, "Hear, O our God; for we are despised: and turn their reproach upon their own head, and cover not their iniquity, and let not their sin be blotted out before Thee." The very next verse adds, "So built we the wall . . . for the people had a mind to work." The enemy cannot overcome you if you will join your prayers for strength to a mind willing to work.

I baptized a young man a few years ago, who had been down in the depths of sin. He told me that there was hardly a commandment he had not broken. He realized the fight he would have to make. When he went back to work, the gang passed around beer at the noon hour, but he refused it. He told them that he had done a right-about-face and was going to live a Christian from that time forward. They undertook to break and batter down his wall of resolves. Sometimes it became so hard to endure that he was half ready to quit his job. He concluded that such would look like cowardice. He told me that often he went to the wash-room and locked himself in, and prayed earnestly to God to help him endure unto the end. He won the fight, and the respect of all the men about him. Those who jeered the most finally admitted that he was living the only worthwhile life. Some of them began to talk about the Bible, and they came to church with him. He had finished his wall.

Master yourself today. Do not be tossed to and fro. Don't do things just because the crowd does them. Stand upon your own feet. If the walls of courage have been broken down, build them again with the rocks of prayer cemented with the mortar of faith. May God grant you strength!

## SILVER-PLATED POTTERY

A few years ago, it was a common practice for shysters and tricksters to take advantage of those who were ignorant, and especially of newly-arrived emigrants, by selling them something which later proved valueless. One of the methods used to fool the unsuspecting was called the "gold brick." This was nothing more nor less than a common clay brick which had been coated over with gold. It looked genuine, and the person who was a prospective dupe was always told that it was a gold bar, made of pure bullion, which had been found and which had to be disposed of at once, since the one selling it was known to the law and might be apprehended. Often the poor victim invested most of his meager savings, believing that he was going to get rich. Imagine his consternation when he learned that all he had purchased was a little pottery clay washed over with gold.

During the days when Jesus was upon earth, the Jews in the vicinity of Jerusalem always whitewashed their tombs before great feast days. Lime was mixed with water and the coating was applied to the doors of the sepulchers for two reasons. It is known from the scriptures, that one who was defiled by touching a bone, a dead body or a grave was not qualified to eat the feast. Thus, by whitewashing the tombs, they were easily seen at night and the passers-by could avoid coming in contact with them. If one did so contact a tomb, without realizing it, the telltale mark would be left upon his garment, and he would not be guilty of eating in a defiled manner, as he would know he was disqualified by the mark upon his robe.

I can conceive of nothing whiter than a tomb on the mountain-side which has been whitewashed. Yet, it remains that such a coating only conceals the putrefying flesh, decaying bodies and ghastly figures of the dead within. Beautiful from the outside, within there was only dead men's bones and uncleanness. Perhaps our Savior never used an example more pregnant with meaning, or fuller of force, than the one in which He declared that hypocrites were like white sepulchers. He said, "Even so, ye also

outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within are full of hypocrisy and iniquity."

It is evident that you cannot judge the contents of a tomb by looking at the whitewashed exterior. You cannot judge the worth of a brick by seeing the gold plate which was put over the clay. Men are all too often wont to judge things by the outward appearance. The Bible declares, "Man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart." It is easy to be deceived by empty profession which covers an empty heart. In connection with this thought, I want to read from Proverbs 26:23, "Burning lips and a wicked heart are like a potsherd covered with silver dross."

The term "potsherd" refers to a fragment of broken pottery. In ancient times when many of the vessels were made from baked clay, they were quite fragile. The women would carry a large waterpot upon their shoulders and go to the well outside the city wall. Sometimes upon arrival, they would set the vessel down, only to have it slip from their grasp and shatter into bits. These bits were called "sherds" and those that were large enough were left by the well to dip water. Sometimes, when a pot was broken at one of the outdoor ovens, larger pieces were retained in order to dip and transfer coals of fire from the oven.

It is quite obvious that such pieces of pottery would be practically worthless. If someone would coat a piece with silver dross, however, it would gleam and sparkle in the sun, and if planted in the right place, it might cause the unwary to think that he had uncovered a treasure. The term "burning lips" as used in this connection has reference to lips that are warm with professions of love and respect, but which, nevertheless, conceal the true motives of a heart which is wicked. Such burning lips, with a wicked heart underneath are like a potsherd covered with silver dross.

There are a great many persons today who are nothing but silver-plated pottery. With hearts full of jealousy, they undermine their brethren, using insinuations and innuendoes. They'll never come out plain, for that would destroy their purpose. They want to leave an opportunity so that they can always claim that they have your interest and that of the church at heart. They declare to high heaven that they have only the best wishes for the church in their souls, but they will, nevertheless, do all that they

can to ruin your influence, the meanwhile protesting that they are fearful for your welfare. They are potsherds covered with silver dross, hypocrites who would like to see you removed, because you stand in the way of their ambition for dictatorship and power.

When David returned to Jerusalem after the fight against Absalom, he made Amasa captain over the host. This position had previously been held by Joab, who was a stern and unrelenting warrior. It was more than Joab could stand, to know that he was to be replaced by another in the sight of all the people, so he went forth to meet Amasa. They came face to face in the highway. Joab, with apparent interest, and friendly smiles, went up to Amasa and said, "Art thou in health, my brother?" Note his hypocrisy. The Bible says, "And Joab took Amasa by the beard with his right hand to kiss him." This token of affection moved Amasa with gratitude and we read, "Amasa took no heed to the sword that was in Joab's hand: so he smote him therewith . . . and Amasa wallowed in blood in the midst of the highway." Joab was a potsherd covered with silver dross, a hypocrite pretending interest to get to kill his friend.

Judas Iscariot went to the scheming, treacherous High Priest, and the other members of the Sanhedrin who wanted to kill Jesus of Nazareth, and covenanted with them to betray him into their hands. Upon their inquiry as to how they would recognize him, and get the right one, Judas gave them a sign. When the lowly Nazarene was at prayer in the tranquil garden, He looked up to see flitting shadows of men, coming swiftly through the olive trees. One of these men, when the others were near, stepped out of the surrounding gloom, and cried, "Hail, Master." Quickly coming onward, he placed a kiss upon the brow of this innocent one, and the pack, seeing the sign, closed in like slaving wolves for the kill. Judas Iscariot was a potsherd covered with silver dross. His warm, affectionate lips belied his dirty, lying heart.

Men even attempt to fool God in this fashion. Puny, worm-like creatures of the dust, they rise up in their arrogance and attempt to sell the Creator a "gold brick." Long ago, Jehovah spoke to the prophet Ezekiel, and declared, "And they come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them: for with their mouth they show much love, but their heart goeth after covetousness."

Jesus spoke to the fawning pretenders of His day on earth, saying, "Well did Esaias prophesy of you saying, This people draweth nigh unto Me with their mouth, and honoreth Me with their lips; but their heart is far from me" (Matthew 15:7,8). Many there are who sit in the church with hymn-books opened and singing the songs of Zion, but with their minds far away upon the material things of life. Many during the prayer service stand with heads bowed and in a physical attitude of penitence, but their hearts permit worldly thoughts to intrude. Many at the table of the Lord partake of the bread which represents the broken body of the Son of God, or drink of the cup which portrays so graphically his shed blood, the meanwhile their thoughts stray to the transitory things of life. All of these are potsherds covered with silver dross, pretending to be that which closer inspection within proves they are not. They make clean the outside of the platter, but within are full of extortion and excess, as says our blessed Lord.

For hundreds of years, the ancient alchemists attempted to find a means by which they could turn baser substances into gold. In crude laboratories, in dingy attics, in hidden dungeons, they worked incessantly at the task. But they never found the secret. I'm glad, though, that the thing which is impossible with men is possible with God. The Great Alchemist of the universe can take your heart of clay and turn into gold that worthless life of yours. He can, through His Word, make it possible for you to be pure gold, not just gold-plated. Cease to do evil, learn to do good. Let the chemical substance of God's great plan transform your life, and transfigure your existence. The world needs no potsherds glittering with silver dross. It does need genuine Christians, solid gold all the way through. Be one of that kind.

## ABOMINABLE PRAYERS

I am a firm believer in prayer. The Bible teaches that the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much (James 5:16). Jesus said, "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: for everyone that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that

knocketh it shall be opened. . . . If ye being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?" Paul said, "I will therefore that men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands without wrath and doubting" (1 Timothy 2:8).

I do not believe that prayer is a substitute for obedience. A lot of people in this modern day refuse to accept the terms laid down in God's Book, but rely upon prayer to save them regardless of their refusal to obey what God has commanded. Under such conditions, prayer is not effective. It does not avail anything. Instead, it is abominable in the sight of God. In Proverbs 28:9 is the statement, "He that turneth away his ear from hearing His law, even his prayer shall be abomination." That is plain. There can be no mistake about it. If a person refuses to obey God's law, not only will his prayer be worthless; it will actually be an abomination unto God.

Let us see what far-reaching results we obtain from reasoning upon this matter. Take for instance, the subject of helping those who are destitute. We have definite commands upon the subject. "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father, is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world" (James 1:27). In the Old Testament, God positively declared, "If there be among you a poor man . . . thou shalt not harden thine heart, nor shut thine hand from thy poor brother, but thou shalt open thine hand wide unto him, and shalt surely hand him sufficient for his need, in that which he lacketh" (Deuteronomy 15:7,8).

Suppose a brother who is poor comes to me for aid. I have enough to share with him, but I refuse to do it. Out of greediness and with a covetous mind, I say to the destitute one, "I do not feel obligated to give you anything of a tangible nature, but I'll pray for you, that God may help you and take care of you." Will that prayer be of any value in securing a blessing for me? It will not! Instead, it will be an abomination unto God. I read, "If a brother or sister be naked, or destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; what doth it profit?" (James 2:15).

Many of you who listen have never obeyed the gospel. You have continued thus far in life without hope of eternal life. If

you die in the condition in which you now are, you will be lost. You know that! The terms of obedience are simple. You can understand them. Jesus said to His apostles, "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). On the day of Pentecost, when those men first preached the Word of Truth in its gospel fulness, thousands asked what they must do. The answer was given in no uncertain terms, "Repent and be baptized everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for remission of sins" (Acts 2:38). When Peter declared the gospel to the Gentiles, he asked, "Can any man forbid water that these should not be baptized?" The record says, "And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord" (Acts 10:47,48).

Have you been baptized into Christ? Perhaps you say that you are praying to God for salvation. You'll not obtain it that way. I know that a lot of smooth, oily-tongued radio preachers will tell you that all you need to do is kneel down and pray for Jesus to save you. But Jesus didn't say that! He told you to believe, repent and be baptized. And the baptism He commanded was baptism in water. If you haven't done what God has told you to do, why pray to Him? The Book affirms, "He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be an abomination."

Someone may ask, "Do you think that a person will be lost if he merely refuses to be baptized?" Absolutely I do. When a man knows the will of God and then stubbornly, arrogantly, defiantly refuses to obey it, God has held forth no hope for him. Would a man be saved if he refused to believe in the Lord Jesus? Would he be saved if he refused to repent of his sins? You know he would not. The very same verse which commands you to do one of these also commands you to be baptized into Christ! Why accept one, and reject the other? The law to the alien sinner is to "repent and be baptized." Will you turn away your ear from hearing the law?

You ask, "What is God going to do to all of those who teach that a man doesn't have to obey the command to be baptized?" I answer that by calling attention to the words of Jesus, "Whosoever therefore shall break one of the least of these commandments, and shall teach men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:19). Let's go further, "Though we or an

angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed" (Galatians 1:8,9).

The apostles preached the gospel unto us. We have it recorded in the New Testament Scriptures. We have received it. If an angel from heaven comes and preaches a different gospel than that which they preached, that angel will be accursed. If any man preaches another gospel than that which we have received, that man will be accursed. But the apostles taught men to repent and be baptized for remission of sins. Then, if someone comes and teaches you that you do not need to be baptized for remission of sins, that is another gospel. Verily it is the exact opposite of the gospel which the apostles taught and which we received. The person who teaches such a false and contrary doctrine is doomed to destruction.

It may be urged that a lot of good men teach such a doctrine. I don't care how good they are. I'm sure they're not any better than angels from heaven, and the record says that if an angel from heaven preaches another doctrine than that which we have received, that angel will be accursed. When anyone comes to you and teaches that you do not need to obey the commands of God, but that you can wilfully, deliberately and carelessly disregard them, and then by praying to God you can gain salvation, that person is a malicious perverter of divine truth. The Bible tells you to do just what it tells everyone else to do. It does not have one way of saving one man, and another way of saving his neighbor.

You'll be inclined to argue about what I am teaching. You'll assert that according to this lesson a great many people will be lost. You're going to want to know what will happen to all of those who are not baptized. I want you to know that there's no reason for anyone being lost. You can all be saved by obeying the Word of God. A continuous invitation is held out for you to come and accept Christ upon the terms laid down in the New Testament. But if everyone refused to accept it, that still wouldn't argue against the Truth of it. God's Word is not true because of the number of people who accept it; it is true because it is God's Word. If everyone refused to obey it, it would still be true.

You may insist that you'll take your chances with another way. You'll ignore the positive command to be baptized; you'll ignore the example of Jesus, the example of the three thousand on Pentecost, of Paul, Cornelius, the Ethiopian eunuch, Lydia, the Philipian jailer, and all of the other host of sincere souls who accepted the New Testament way. You may decide to go on and try to pray for salvation, without doing what the law commands. That's with you, but I want you to know that you are without justification. You have heard the way of the gospel outlined. You have listened to the reading of the truth. You are without excuse. If you turn this day from obedience to these plain and positive commands, your prayers will avail you nothing.

Why not resolve to do as God demands? Why not say, as did one of old, "Speak, Lord, thy servant heareth"? You cannot afford to take chances with your soul. Turn your ears from those who preach another doctrine. Turn your face toward God's Word. "He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be an abomination."

## GAINING BY GIVING

Egypt was called the bread basket of the ancient world. This was because the Nile Valley was so rich and productive that a good crop was generally assured, unless God sent a punishing famine as in the days of Joseph. There is very little rainfall in Egypt. The country depends wholly upon the annual overflow of its famous river to guarantee fertility. In olden times the method of planting grain was very peculiar. The Egyptians waited until the river was at its flood stage, and about ready to recede after having attained the crest of its rise. Then they went out in their reed boats, and scattered the grain upon the surface of the water.

As the waters went down, the seeds were deposited in the alluvial mud. It was not long until green shoots could be seen poking through the soil and the grain grew rapidly unto maturity. It is evident that under such a system a farmer would gather in a harvest proportionate to the amount of grain he sowed. If he were tight-fisted and afraid, he might reason that a bushel of grain in the granary was worth two in the distant future, and thus by refusal to commit the grain to the water, he would not gather in

a very luxurious harvest. This method of sowing was used to illustrate the scriptural teaching on the subject of giving.

In Ecclesiastes 11:1, the Lord says, "Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it again after many days." It might appear to the sower that he was taking a chance with his grain by scattering it upon the river, but he would eventually receive it back with great increase. The apostle Paul says, "He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully" (2 Corinthians 9:6). Many who profess to love the Lord are fearful to give a great deal for fear that they will be reduced to want and suffering themselves. I want to illustrate to you today how we really gain by giving. It is a divine principle and those of you who are anxious to increase your pleasure in the world had better listen with careful attention.

I call attention, first of all, to Proverbs 11:24,25: "There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty. The liberal soul shall be made fat; and he that watereth shall be watered also himself" We learn from this that it is possible for a man to be generous and still increase; it is also possible for one to hold back selfishly what he has, and tend to poverty. God's blessing will be upon the liberal soul.

Many of you who are listeners to this program have never received many blessings from God. Have you placed yourself in position to receive them? You claim to love God. How much do you love Him? Do you love Him to the extent that you are willing to invest a sizable portion of what you have in the proclamation of the gospel to others? Do you contribute regularly to the Lord's work, and if so, do you give niggardly and miserly, grudging every cent that you spend to help others? Are you always on the receiving end, never on the sending end? May I call to your mind that according to the Bible you never really get on the receiving end until you get on the sending end.

I believe that we are blessed of God proportionately as we give to Him. A man who sows little will reap but little. That is true in the natural realm. It is true in farming. You can't plant an acre and get the crop from a hundred acres. If you have a farm of five acres, and the man across the road has one of a hundred acres, and I see you gathering your corn to the total of 500 bushels, while your neighbor has 5,000 bushels, I do not think that

strange. I know that you are gathering in proportion as you planted. Even if the two of you have but five acres each, if one will not plant his seed for fear that he will not get it back again, and the other generously bestows his seed upon the ground, I know that the man who planted will reap where the man who refused to plant can never reap.

Your money is seed. It is a harvest which you have gathered up as a result of toil. Just as you lay in a corn crop, and use part of it for sustenance, and set aside some for seed, so you should do with your money. Plant it in the field of God. When you give money to feed the poor, to clothe the orphans, to relieve the distress of the widow, to bring comfort to the destitute, you are not losing that money. Somehow, some way, some time, you will receive a blessing for the bread that has been cast upon the waters. To give money for the spread of the gospel, for the preaching of the truth, for the circulation of God's Word, is like putting seed into the ground. It will not be lost!

Many times it will remain long buried. It may be like the seed which lies in the earth giving no indication of any return or increase. You might even forget about it. You might conclude that it was lost and dead. But in due time it will spring up and you'll find a blessing in it. I knew a man who lived on his father's old home place, having fallen heir to it upon the decease of his parents. An emergency arose, when his wife had to be taken to the hospital suddenly. Five hundred dollars was required to take care of the necessary fees. He was not able to raise the money at once, without selling some of his stock which was not yet ready for market. He did not want to go in debt.

As he was driving home, he pondered in his mind what he should do. When he arrived at his house, a car was parked in the front. The occupants were timber buyers. One of them said, "We were timber cruising on the back side of your place and we saw that grove of walnut trees which you have, We'd like to buy them, and if you'll agree to sell, I'll give you a check for \$1,000 to bind the deal." The owner of the farm was too surprised to talk, until the other said, "By the way, how did those trees happen to be there in that grove-like fashion?" The answer was, "My sister and I were playing there almost fifty years ago, and I laughingly suggested that I was going to set me out a walnut grove. I planted them there in the soil, and now they have repaid

me many times over, although I had never thought of their value."

Once, shortly after we were married, we found ourselves in rather difficult straits. Both my wife and I were sick. The rent was due the next day. We were without funds. I knew that somehow I would make it, but I did not know how. That very afternoon the mail carrier brought but one letter. That one solved our problem, however. It contained a check which took care of the rent and left an additional ten dollars for added expenses of the sickness. The letter stated that I had done so much good for the church in their city that they wanted to show appreciation in that way. It was the return of bread cast upon the waters!

A lot of my friends that talk about giving seem to believe that the only reward obtainable is the one that comes after death. They do not believe that God rewards man for his generosity and cheerful giving on this earth. I firmly believe there will be a reward after death, but I also firmly believe there will be one in this life as well. Paul says, "Now he that ministereth seed to the sower both minister bread for your food, and multiply your seed sown, and increase the fruits of your righteousness" (2 Corinthians 8:10). Inasmuch as the inspired apostle would not have been led to pray for that which would not be granted to others, and to commend them with such a blessing, I feel confident that the blessing will be ours to share if we fulfill the conditions upon which it is obtainable.

Some of the great benefits from liberal giving cannot be estimated in material things, however. One of the finest is the comfort and peace which it brings. If you have a great deal of wealth and you wish to use it to purchase happiness and joy, the best investment you can make is to put it to work in liberality to relieve the needs of others and to further the spread of the gospel. There will immediately result to you such an inward feeling of pleasure as will make your heart glow with warmth and happiness.

All of us have memories. We cannot escape from them. In the years to come you will receive a much greater thrill from knowing that you have helped others than in realizing you have spent all your substance, like the prodigal, in riotous living. Why not assure yourself that you'll be free from regret and mental torture, from unmingled reproach and pain, as you near the grave? You can prepare now for an old age of happiness, and a cheerful death. Cast thy bread upon the waters!