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Seeking the Old Paths

By

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by W. CARL KETCHERSIDE

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THE PATHS OF REST

The time when Jeremiah the prophet lived upon earth was a time of apostasy from God, a time when those who pretended to be God's people had followed off after strange gods and false worship. Their lives were full of hypocrisy, and their hearts full of evil thoughts. But let the ancient prophet himself describe the conditions which he met as he attempted to uphold the Word of God's truth.

"Their transgressions are many and their backslidings have increased. How shall I pardon thee for this? thy children have forsaken me, and sworn by them that are no gods: when I had fed them to the full, they then committed adultery, and assembled themselves by troops in the harlots' houses. Shall I not visit punishment for these things, saith the Lord? and shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?" (Jeremiah 5:6-9).

When the prophet of God saw the punishment heaped upon the people by famine, flood and fire, he cried out, "O Lord, are not Thine eyes upon the truth? Thou hast stricken them, but they have not grieved; Thou hast consumed them, but they have refused correction: they have made their faces harder than a rock; they have refused to return." Then he concluded that perhaps the people as a whole were ignorant, and he decided to appeal to their political leaders and determine if it would be possible to get them to return to the Lord, and thus use their influence to save the nation which was heading for destruction, so he continues: "Therefore I said, Surely these are poor; they are foolish: for they know not the way of the Lord, nor the judgment of their God. I will get me unto the great men, and will speak unto them; for they have known the way of the Lord, and the judgment of their God: but these have altogether broken the yoke and burst the bonds" (Jeremiah 5:4, 5).

He found that those who ruled were greedy and avaricious, that they would sell men for the price of a pair of shoes, and the souls of men for a few dollars. They upheld the wicked in the

courts and trampled the poor underfoot. Here's what he declares about them, "Their houses are full of deceit; therefore they are become great and waxen rich. They are waxen fat, they shine: yea, they overpass the deeds of the wicked: they judge not the cause, the cause of the fatherless, yet they prosper; and the right of the needy do they not judge" (Jeremiah 5:27, 28).

Preaching had no effect, the word was ignored, and the admonition of the prophet laughed to scorn. He indicts his generation in this language, "This people hath a revolting and rebellious heart; they are revolted and gone. Neither say they in their heart, Let us now fear the Lord our God, that giveth rain, and reserveth unto us the appointed weeks of the harvest" (Jeremiah 5:23, 24). The blessings of nature they took from God without even thanking Him. They enjoyed the rain and ate of the harvest, but the voice of thanksgiving was absent from their tables. Ingratitude was the order of the day; immorality the practice of the night.

But you may ask, "What were the religious leaders of the people doing, that they did not stop this flow of ungodliness?" The answer is found in the text, "A wonderful and horrible thing is committed in the land; The prophets prophesy falsely and the priests bear rule by their means, and my people love to have it so" (Jeremiah 5:30, 31). Just think of it! Those who had been raised up by the Lord to lead the people religiously were falsifying for money, preaching lies to get as much of this world's goods as they could; and the priests had become rich and were using their money and prestige to rule the common people. The kingdom of the clergy had risen up to a position of prominence and had profited upon souls, selling them like so much cattle, for what they could gain! What a terrible picture! What an awful state for a nation to be in!

Reading further, I find this language, "From the least of them even unto the greatest of them everyone is given to covetousness; and from the prophet even unto the priest everyone dealeth falsely. They have healed also the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, saying Peace, peace; when there is no peace" (Jeremiah 6:13, 14). Yes, the false teachers tried to minimize the fears of the people. They intimated that Jeremiah was a killjoy, a pessimist, and an old fogey. "Ah," they said, "Conditions aren't as

bad as he lets on. Go on and enjoy yourselves. We are living in an enlightened age. We are in a modern day. Don't pay any attention to these prophets of doom. Have a good time. These religious fanatics and crackpots are always telling mankind that God is displeased, but we don't worship a God of fear, we worship a God of love. Dance, drink, make merry." We can imagine that such was about the advice of the modernistic teachers of religion in that day.

But now I want you to note the true remedy for that terrible condition in which Israel found herself. "Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls" (Jeremiah 6:16). Ask for the old paths! In them there is rest for the soul! But the people said, "We will not walk therein."

My friends, I want to point out to you that today we are living dangerously near in the same state of affairs as drew the condemnation of God in the days of Jeremiah. All the symptoms that were prevalent then are with us today and multiplied upon the earth. Let us just ask ourselves candidly if that is not true, and seek for the answer among ourselves and in our own communities.

One of the characteristics of that age was idolatry. I charge that America today is made up of a nation of idol worshippers. Men serve the gods of wealth, power and prestige; they bow before the goddesses of pleasure, pride and lust. The moving picture theaters with their half nude actresses on the silver screen, and their scenes of carousing and drunkenness are filled to capacity. The taverns and saloons are turning out their spawn of broken hearts and broken lives, and the churches are emptied! Adultery fills the land! An actor recently admitted his lustful relationship with a young girl, and the newspapers sent broadcast through the land the picture of a bunch of crazy women who flocked around him for his autograph. One of the women jurors said she would like to kiss the dear boy. What an idol for our boys to pattern after. America has gone a long way down the road to hell, when we will find people breaking their necks to see Mae West, and refusing to go listen to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

In Jeremiah's time, the religious leaders came in for their share of stern rebuke. I say that we today are not to be thought guilt-

less. The churches have compromised with the world. They have turned their precincts into a place for mushy book reviews, little pink teas, and even worse bingo parties, and gambling of various kinds. It is no worse to bet on a horse race than it is on a quilt raffle. The fact that you put the word "church" up over a door does not keep it from being a gambling house, if the same thing goes on there as goes on at any other gambling den. "The prophets prophesy falsely, and the people love to have it so," said Jeremiah. The world is in a serious state today. I veritably believe that we are passing through this terrible crisis because we have forgotten God. There is only one remedy for us and that is to return to God. Get back to Him, and back to the Bible. The remedy for our ills is the same as when Jeremiah spoke, "Stand in the ways, and see, and ASK FOR THE OLD PATHS, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls."

I intend to search for the old paths in company with each of you who will listen each Sunday afternoon. Tell your friends and neighbors to search with us for the good way, the way of God, and oh, may He help us all to walk therein.

THE VALUE OF OLD THINGS

At the darkest hour of Israel's history, when idolatry and immorality had supplanted the worship of Jehovah, the prophet Jeremiah proclaimed, "Stand in the ways, but ask ye for the old paths, wherein is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest unto your souls" (Jeremiah 6:16). And today, when sectarianism is rife in our land, when the doctrines and commandments of men have created division and caused confusion, when honest people cry out to know the truth, it is well for us to seek for the old paths, the paths of God.

Today as always, men are on a constant lookout for something that is new! Millions of dollars invested in research laboratories, and specialists in the fields of chemistry, medicine and armament are working day and night for our government. There is a feverish desire to invent. This is not a modern tendency of man. When

the apostle Paul set foot in Athens, the intellectual center of the world in his day, it is recorded that "All the Athenians and the strangers sojourning there spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell or to hear some new thing" (Acts 17:21). It still remains as it did then that intellectually and philosophically, man seeks to ferret out new truths.

There is nothing wrong with an endeavor to learn that which is new. All of our modern labor-saving devices are the result of such investigation. Still it remains that with the discovery of new modes and methods; with the bringing to light of new forms of nature, there many times arises a species of skepticism which seeks to ridicule all that is old. It must therefore be remembered that new things are not always true things; and neither are true things always new things. Old things are not necessarily false! A thing may be old and still be true; it may be new and yet be false. I am willing to affirm that what was truth two thousand years ago is still truth; and moreover it will be truth two thousand years hence, if the world continues that long.

It is self-evident that laws change! But principles endure! They cannot change! They are right, not because argument makes them so, but because of their inherent connection with God and His sacred Word. But puny man in his extreme egotism, beholding the works of his own hands, and seeing the progress which he has made in the natural realm, conceives often the thought that he can improve upon God's system. He writes new creeds, and forms new dogmas of faith, and what is the result? Confusion, division, carnal strife. For a man to attempt to improve upon God's system of worship in a convention called to formulate a creed is as absurd as it would be for the Congress of the United States to pass a law that the sun, moon and stars will henceforth be regulated by a bureau appointed for that purpose. The same God who made the sun to shine upon the material world has also sent forth the life-giving rays of His gospel as the sun to brighten and warm our spirits. I quote from 2 Corinthians 4:6, "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."

The Psalmist David declared, "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth His handiwork. . . In them hath He set a tabernacle for the sun" (Psalm 19:1, 4). The sun is as old as creation, but it still serves its purpose today as it did when spoken into existence by the One who created all things by Jesus Christ. Just so it is with the gospel. It has not lost its force, nor abrogated its power!

It is a strange paradox that with all of our inventions there seems to be less time today to do the things that really count. Many of my listeners are in rural districts, and most of the rest of you came from the country to this great metropolitan area. I did, and am proud of the fact. Well, sir, years ago life in the country was considerable of a drudgery. Your grandfather had no modern machinery with which to work. No tractor, no gang plow, no combine, no automobile. Grandmother had to get up before dawn, bustle around by dim yellow candlelight, as she prepared a hearty breakfast. She had no cream separator, but with spoon in hand, she skimmed the cream from the milk crock, down at the old spring house. She had no vacuum cleaner for the old rag carpet which was laid over a cushion of new straw from the stack. Hers was a life of toil and manual labor. But isn't it strange that in those good old days whole families went to church and got there on time?

No automobile sounded its horn to notify the tardy members of the family it was time to go. Instead all rode in the big wagon, or perhaps joined the neighbors who were walking down the hollow to the little church at the crossroads. After the morning service, there was visiting and happy chatting about the things that concerned the community. Perhaps twenty people went home with grandmother for dinner. But that didn't worry her! Now, when you know two people are coming, you clean and dust, and scrub and brush, and cook and stew for a week in advance, worry about whether the service at the table will be just exactly according to Emily Post, and then stay home from church to finish the meal. I daresay it still doesn't hit the spot, like some of grandma's good old-fashioned dinners which she put on a groaning table, as she bustled about with her checked apron whipping the kitchen breeze!

This is called a "machine age." The days of yesterday are sneeringly referred to as "the horse and buggy age." Well, folks, it's my honest opinion that when the horse went out, a lot of good "horse sense" went with him. What we need today is less horsepower under the hood and more horsensense behind the wheel. When a nation gets so fast it has not time to stop and think about God, it's traveling at too great a speed. I'm not an old fogey, but I want to register my calm opinion that we need to ask for the old paths, wherein is the good way!

Ask for the old paths! That was the command of God when His ancient people wandered from Him! That also is the message of God in these days of fast living, of lust-guided, devil-inspired, hell-filling corruption. There is no joy in catering to the flesh! No permanent pleasure can result therefrom. You who were reared by Christian fathers and mothers, who taught you, prayed for you and wept over you—do not tell me that you are satisfied as you loll at the bar and guzzle that which intoxicates, which causes you to wreck your homes, blight your happiness and send you staggering on the road to damnation. You who this day forsake the House of the Lord, and follow the dizzy course of the world in sin, do not tell me that your wasting beauty, your bloated faces or bedazzled minds bring true pleasure to you. It is not true, and you know that it is not. "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked."

But you say there is nothing in modern religion to satisfy! You tell me that the churches are public forums for political discussions, that they have become commercialized, that religion is reduced from a soul-saving basis to a dollars-and-cents proposition. Too often your charges are true! There are too many places more concerned with serving sandwiches to a club meeting in a church basement than with passing out the Bread of Life in the pulpit! God did not intend for the church to become a glorified restaurant, where chicken suppers were served to pay a pastor's salary. The church has departed a long way from the idealism of the Savior. It has followed the world, instead of leading the world to follow Christ. The church is to exist in the world, but it has now got the world in the church. It has become a theater, a dance hall, a gambling den. Only this week I saw bills displayed, declaring that

six cases of whiskey would be given away at a church benefit. I lift up my voice against this! It desecrates religion, makes a mockery of religion, causes religion to become a hiss and byword. The Churches of Christ stand today, like the voice of one crying in the wilderness, pleading with you to ask for the old paths, the paths of God. People, let us go back to the Bible!

THINGS THAT DO NOT CHANGE

As we continue our search for the old paths, the paths of God, I remind you once more that Jeremiah the prophet said, "Ask for the old paths, wherein is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls." Today I want to consider this subject under the three headings in the quotation, as follows: The old paths contain the good way, we must walk in those paths to be blessed, and then, the result, we will find rest for our souls.

The old paths contain the good way! There are many things that are in a process of transformation in our world today. Geographical lines are being obliterated, national forces are being altered, and war is changing our whole international relationship. Death is taking our loved ones with startling rapidity, the casualty lists grow longer, the telegrams from the War Department come with increasing frequency. Sometimes it may seem to us that there is nothing in the universe that remains the same! But that thought is certainly incorrect. There are a great many things that do not change!

Sin does not change! It is the same today as it was in the garden of Eden. The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye and the pride of life still constitute the bait for the devil's hook; and it still snares humanity on every side. Neither has the result of sin altered one iota. It still remains true that "The wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23); and the statement of James, "Lust when it is conceived bringeth forth sin, and sin when it is finished bringeth forth death" (James 1:15), has never been set aside.

And just as true is it that the remedy for sin has never been changed. Man has learned much about medical science within the

past few years. Methods of treatment have been completely altered insofar as some maladies are concerned. But the prescription for sin is unalterable. Today, as two thousand years ago, it is the blood of Christ that cleanseth us from all sin (1 John 1:7). But men have tried to rule Christ out of daily living; they have sought to ignore Him, and let His precepts die by default. In their greed for money they have overlooked His teaching, that "It is more blessed to give than to receive"; and in their thirst for power they have forgotten the Sermon on the Mount, which declares "Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth." What is the result?

Have we found a new source of goodness? Have we improved ourselves? Has the present generation with its wisdom increased the moral goodness of the world? Sadly we must admit that our boys and girls are degrading themselves, that depravity of character is causing increasing concern among the law enforcement bodies of our country. Drinking, gambling, carousing, reeling toward destruction of our nation, and subsequent damnation; we are forced to admit that we have forfeited many of the sterling qualities which made America great in the days that are past. Oh, people, when will we realize that the old paths contain the good way?

Mothers and fathers have laughed at those who have gone to church and taken their children to the House of God; they have sneered at the ones who gathered their little brood around them at the close of day to read the Bible and pray; but now those who have ridiculed Christian living can read in the lines of debauchery traced by the finger of lust upon the countenance of their own dear ones that it still pays to live right. And I want to be understood in this statement I am now going to make! I have no desire to see the names of my children in the society column of the Sunday paper, I have no desire to see them popular in the modern resorts and gambling casinos, for I know that some day those things all shall pass away, but before God I say this day that I am concerned that the names of my loved ones shall be enrolled in the Lamb's Book of Life, beyond this vale of tears. I'd rather be old-fashioned and go to Heaven than to be ten years ahead of my time and go to Hell. God's Word contains the good way! I love it! I want to be guided by it!

But it is not enough to know the good way. The text says that we "must walk therein." The Christian life is good only when it is practiced. Too many act toward their religion as they do with regard to their Sunday clothes. They put on their religion at nine o'clock on Sunday morning and take it off when they get home at noon. More than anything else on this earth today, we need plain, simple Christian living! It should permeate our business dealings, bind us closer to our neighbors, make us better parents and better citizens of this great commonwealth. Religion is not merely for the inside of the church, it is for daily practice.

Christianity suffers more from its friends than from its avowed enemies. Men who sit with a beatific smile upon their faces in the church on Sunday, then get out on Monday and tell some dirty, immoral, filthy story; or who take the name of God in profane swearing, these are striking a knife into the heart of the church and are crucifying the Son of God afresh, putting Him to an open shame. What blessing can we derive from our prayers to God if with the same lips that we hallow the name of the Father on one day, we damn His creatures on the next? It is the hypocrisy, the sham, the sneaking, underhanded miserable lives of those who profess to serve God but deny Him by their works that brings the religion of the Master into disrepute. Let us walk in the good way! Let us make it our course of life, let it become our character, that we may influence others about us to love and serve Him who died for all of us!

It is related of a certain miller that he went from his work to the post office, with his clothes covered with flour. As he edged his way through the crowd he left his mark upon everyone with whom he came in contact. You could tell the path he had taken by looking at those whom he touched. Just so in a spiritual sense, we should leave a mark of goodness upon everyone we meet. Will the world be able to trace your path by the spirituality of those whom you met along the way? Can the world see Jesus in you?

Years ago, cities had gaslights for the streets. These had to be lighted individually by the lamplighter, who made his rounds at dusk. As he moved along down the way, you could not see him in the gathering darkness, but you could tell exactly where he was by the trailing light he left behind him. That is true in life!

People can tell just about where you are, how far you've gone, and how much you've accomplished, by the light you leave behind you as you go. If you walk in the gospel way, the light of that gospel will be a trail for others to follow.

And the result will be rest for your soul. Not rest for your body! Christianity demands a life of service. Did you ever think how the Scriptures portray our life on earth? It is a fight of faith, a walk, a race! Action is required in all of these. There is no rest for the weary body. Jesus did not say, "Come unto Me all ye that labor and are heavy laden and ye shall find rest unto your bodies." He said "rest for your souls." Soul-rest! That is the promise of Heaven! You can enjoy that rest even while you are walking in the road of life. Clear conscience, communion with the Savior, strength for the daily burden—all of these will be provided if you ask for the old paths and walk therein!

Once as I sat in a duck blind waiting for a string of mallards to alight, the thought came to me that man himself is a migratory creature. Just as each season an impelling urge drives the ducks and geese from their Canadian homes to the warmth of the south, so there is within us an instinct that cries out for us to travel toward a better place. This world is not our home. Earth is not our dwelling-place! God has marked out a pathway that leads to eternal rest!

Here we suffer heartache and distress! We see our loved ones called home, we stand beside their graves with tear-dimmed eyes and trembling lips! Weary and worn, we struggle onward. But thanks be to God, "there is rest for the weary if rest they will seek, there is cheer for the lonely, and strength for the weak. There is pardon and blessing and endless reward. There is perfect salvation in Jesus our Lord."

SAFETY AND SIMPLICITY

In our search for the old paths, we have learned that the primitive church was a simple institution. There were no organizations or councils to interfere with, impede and retard the scriptural work

of the One Body. But there was a constant fear in the hearts of the apostles that men would seek out inventions, and by their own wisdom and ingenuity overthrow the simplicity of this grand institution. So we find Paul saying in 2 Corinthians 11:3, "But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtility, so your hearts should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ." He warns Timothy to "Preach the Word; be instant in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth and shall be turned unto fables" (2 Timothy 4:2-4).

Once more he pleads with the Hebrew Christians, "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God" (Hebrews 3:12). The apostle Peter referring to the false prophets under the Jewish dispensation then affirms, "But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false prophets among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction" (2 Peter 2:1). The writer then adds as a sad afterthought, "And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of." It is certainly true that those who profess to love the Lord and then walk in hypocrisy are not only detrimental to the church, but their very lives bring blasphemy upon those who truly are trying to walk in the paths of righteousness.

I unhesitatingly affirm that all the predictions which I have read from the writings of the holy apostles are being fulfilled before our eyes this day. I charge, without fear of contradiction, that the religious world has been beguiled by Satan to depart from the simplicity that is in Christ. There are those who think that worship can only be carried on in great temples and cathedrals, erected by man! The poor are exploited, and the rich are inveigled into pouring into earthly structures great sums of money, that might better be used in carrying the truth to dying humanity. Once when I was in the east, I visited a great and ornate cathedral, which had

cost more than a million dollars! The sum still owed on it was over half of that amount. Women were bending over the wash-tub, men were working under the hot sun on the railroad section crews to pay for that; and within a block of that building I found men and women who had hardly enough clothes to cover their backs, and hardly enough food to sustain their undernourished families. I ask you today, friends, what would Christ have said under those circumstances?

The Savior when He was upon earth had no place to lay His head. My Bible teaches me that though He was rich, yet for our sakes He became poor. He was interested in the souls of men! He died for their salvation! But He was interested in their physical well-being also. We need to learn today that the temple in which God dwells is the one which He made himself. It is the life, the body of that man who loves God and serves Him. I read, "What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's" (1 Corinthians 6:19, 20). For the first three centuries the church owned no property of its own. Brethren met in private homes, in upper rooms, in forums and marketplaces. Now there is certainly nothing wrong with the church owning a place in which to meet. But such should be arranged for convenience and not for vainglory. The idea that if a certain church in the community builds an edifice that cost a half-million dollars, so we must hurry and build one that costs a million, and not let them get ahead of us, is foreign to the teachings of the New Testament. Listen to these words, "God that made the world and all things that are therein, seeing that He is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; Neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though He needed anything, seeing He giveth to all life, and breath and all things" (Acts 17:24, 25).

A short time ago I listened to a salesman in his attempt to sell a special kind of refrigerator. He stressed not the beauty of the box, the fast freezing compartment, or the streamlined construction. Instead he emphasized over and over the fact that the refrigerator had just three moving parts. Finally the prospective cus-

tomer asked, "Well, what is the advantage in that?" It was the very question the salesman wanted. Instantly he replied, "Madam, common-sense tells us that the simpler a thing is in its construction, the less trouble can arise. Now, moving parts produce friction. Friction can cause trouble if the oil system fails in any way. We have only three moving parts in our refrigerator. It is simple. It is almost foolproof and troubleproof! You don't need to worry about it." That salesman uttered the truth.

As long as the church continued in its simple worship, simple Christian living and simple service to God and humanity there was little trouble which could arise. It was only when men began to use their organizational ability to try and improve upon God's plan that difficulties aroused a spirit of factionism. The more organizations you have, the more friction will develop. And friction causes trouble unless you keep all of the organizations well-oiled. They are generally kept moving by the essence of greenbacks—another way of saying, "the oil of finance." That's why we have all the frenzied drives for money. It's to keep all of the machinery oiled up that we've tacked on to the church, none of which has the least semblance of scriptural authority. Don't you sometimes sigh for the good old days of plain, simple New Testament worship?

In the apostolic days the church was never troubled by jealousy over who would be the organist, because they had no instrumental music, only simple congregational singing and chanting of hymns; they were never split into warring factions over who should be elected pastor, because they had no one-man preacher-pastor system. Instead every disciple told of the Lord Jesus to everyone he came in contact with. There was no strife over who would be president of the Ladies' Aid, or chairman of the Berean Society, for they had no clubs, societies or other organizations. There was never a bit of division over the menu for the supper which would be served to pay the debt on the choir equipment, for they had no choirs, and they did not commercialize the church by selling chicken suppers, or peddling doughnuts. They had no quilt raffles, bingo games or any other gambling devices in the church.

It is true that they met to pray, but not true that they met to play, bridge or anything else, in their church gatherings. They

were more interested in piety in their lives than they were in pie suppers for their stomachs. They were concerned about the fire of zeal in the pulpit, but not worried about the fire for cooking veal in the kitchen. They assembled not for entertainment but for worship! The church was dedicated to a sacred use, and those who were members of it were consecrated for the Master's work, and He labored with them and blessed them in their endeavors.

These things, which I speak today, I utter because of my love for the New Testament church—the church which my Savior died to establish. It cost His life! He shed His blood to purchase it! That church, we are striving to keep alive this day. Humbly, simply, devotedly, we serve the Master in the beauty of holiness. Friends, if you are tired of the sham and the trappings, of the tinsel and the gaudiness of modernism, we invite you to take your Bible in hand, study the position of the Churches of Christ. We are convinced that many of you will take your stand with us to help restore the pure New Testament church.

JESUS ONLY

The religion of Jesus Christ is a personal religion. It is a religion of individual responsibility. But today that beautifully simple religion has become commercialized. It is now "Big Business." Yet, with all of the schools, seminaries and colleges supported by religion; with all of the printing presses turning out tons of literature; with hundreds of church edifices costing multiplied millions of dollars; with thousands of men, boasting degrees and titles, standing in the pulpit, religion is not making itself felt, even in our own enlightened United States of America. Just think of it! Sixty million people in our own land do not even attend church at all. Many of those who do go are only nominal members, and have no great interest! What is the trouble?

Has God lost His power? Is the arm of the Lord heavy that He cannot lift it in blessing? Has the gospel lost its strength? Is the Truth of Heaven no longer effective? Certainly none of these

things are correct!! Then, what is the trouble? I answer that the power of God's Word is being neutralized and nullified by those who pretend to love Him. We have concentrated on organizing and forming clubs to take care of this feature and that, until today the church has so many extra bodies to drag along behind it that they are constantly holding it back. The church is being "clubbed" to death. We have organizations to do mission work, organizations to do charity work, organizations to do educational work. We have Ladies' Aids, and Pastors' Councils, Berean Societies, Dorcas Societies, Social Committees and Sodalities. We are filled to satiety with Brotherhoods and Sisterhoods. There are Keystone, Cornerstone, and I suppose Whetsone Classes. By the time the minister gets through telling about what all of these are doing there is neither time nor inclination left to preach the pure gospel of the Son of God!

The church is being assassinated by associations; confused and confounded by conferences; counteracted, countermanded and countermined, yes, almost counted out by councils; crippled, curtailed and chloroformed by clubs. The saving power of Heaven is relegated to the scrap heap of antiquity. The Bible is covered up by a wave of social arrangements, and the church has become a place of worldly entertainment, of shows, dances and parties. Yet, all of these are ineffective in leading the world to the foot of the Cross of the Man of Galilee.

Does it not seem peculiar that the handful of apostles, who were ignorant, illiterate, uncouth fishermen, filled the whole world with the religion of Christ in a few years? They had no social prestige. They were hated and despised of all men. They were scourged and beaten with rods. They were jailed as common criminals. They were stoned, bruised and battered. The apostle Paul was not the Reverend Paul, D.D. Instead he says that in the eyes of men he was counted as scum, as offscouring, as something to be cast out and trodden down. Yet this simple, unassuming man converted the jailer who was charged with watching him. When they sent him back to Rome to the court of Caesar he established a church there, and sent back word, "The saints salute you, especially they of the household of Caesar!"

Paul did not present a minstrel show in his pulpit to attract an audience; he had no colored travelogues on Sunday night; he gave no book reviews on current literature; he had no teen-age dancing class in the church basement. But the world sat up and listened. They accused him of turning that world upside down, not realizing that it was downside up to start with, because of its paganism. Lowly men were declared to have filled Jerusalem with their doctrine. How did they do it without councils, societies, conventions and other modern claptrap which has been tacked on to religion? My friends, the answer is that Paul preached "Christ." I resolved to know nothing among you save Jesus and Him crucified. That was his statement to a certain congregation!

But remember that in preaching Christ, Paul condemned sin! He did not pussyfoot and compromise with wrongdoing. Just as Christ scourged the money changers from the temple, so Paul drove them from the sacred precincts of the church. He did not modify his message, because old Brother So-and-So might not like it. He was not a pawn for those in the church who paid his salary! A certain pastor (I believe it's polite to call them ministers in Church of Christ circles) said to me not long ago, "You know, I'd like to turn loose like you do once and fight sin that I know is in my congregation." I said, "Why don't you do it? Fire both barrels at the devil. You can't whip Satan by complimenting him to death." The answer was this, "Yes, but the doctor who pays half of my salary has cautioned me against being too rash in my statements, and I am afraid of offending him. I believe it like you do all right, but I'm taking a little longer road to get it taught." That was a polite way of saying, "I'm sugarcoating the pill until he doesn't know it's medicine."

We need to speak the truth in love. But we want to be certain that it is not all love instead of truth. One can preach on love all of the time until he creates the wrong impression. People will begin to believe that God is made up of tender emotion which will not permit him to punish wrongdoing. But the God of the Bible is a God of wrath as well as a God of love. Love with Him is stern devotion as well as tender emotion! He is not going to pass by our shortcomings. He will not overlook our wilfull trespasses.

He will punish us for our sins. Now there is only one who can save us from sin. That one is the Lord Jesus!

The world needs Jesus today! It has always needed him! It always will! It needs men who preach Christ. It needs men, most of all, who live Him! We have taken the religion of Christ from the daily lives of men and women and locked it up in the pulpit. We have talked about theology! We have discussed philosophy. But the world is crying in the dark. Jesus is the light of the world. The world needs Him! It needs Him now! And it needs nothing else from a spiritual standpoint.

Upon a steep Alpine precipice in Switzerland there stands a white cross of marble. Upon the outstretched arms of that cross are chiseled the words, "Jesus Only." The story is told that the only daughter of a noble family, one day while climbing in the mountains, fell from this precipice and lost her life in the yawning abyss below. The parents, in their deep grief, could find no source of comfort. They attempted to get their minds off the tragedy by traveling, but to no avail. At last in reading their Bible together, they turned to the Lord Jesus and found comfort and peace. Then upon the side of the mountain where they had lost their child, they erected this white cross as a monument. Upon it they inscribed the words, "Jesus Only."

There is no real peace, comfort or satisfaction in the world today save that which comes from Jesus only! You may seek after wealth, fame and power, but all of these are temporary and will soon depart, leaving only a broken spirit and a broken heart. We may turn our churches into palaces of entertainment, halls of gay laughter, or theaters for display; but when we do, the Spirit of God, grieved and wounded, will depart, and there will be nothing left but a hollow shell, echoing to the mockery of our absurd devotions. JESUS ONLY! That is the only true source of strength and might! The Savior only is the producer of real happiness. And I am praying, pleading, preaching that we get back to God and the Bible. Regardless of what the outcome may be insofar as I am personally concerned, I shall still stand up for Jesus. And the Churches of Christ which stand with me in this program presentation are urging a return to the Word of God as our only safe

rule of faith and practice. Will you come and go with us in this journey to a better land? Remember the words of James Russell Lowell:

*They are slaves who fear to speak
For the fallen and the weak;
They are slaves who will not choose
Hatred, scoffing, and abuse,
Rather than in silence shrink
From the truth they needs must think;
They are slaves who dare not be
In the right with two or three.*

Yet in my heart, I feel there must be many who listen in this day and who are with us in this fight for pure living, pure religion, pure Churches and pure Christianity. May God bless all who strive to make this world a better place in which to live.

THE MODERN PASTOR SYSTEM

It was once my privilege to stand at the headwaters of the Missouri River. The little streams which flowed southward to merge into this great waterway were clear and cool. It seemed impossible that they constituted the beginning of what later became a swirling, muddy, silt-laden river, destructive in force as it rushed to meet the mighty Mississippi. One would hardly conceive, as he stood at the junction of these two, that they had their inception in crystal-clear springs. The farther from the fountain-head you go, the greater becomes the corruption of the waters.

That is true in the religion of Christianity. As one stands today and hears the bickering over creeds, beholds the multiplicity of ideas advanced from hundreds of pulpits, listens to the caviling over the doctrines and commandments of men, he wonders in amazement what the beginning of this movement was like. Let us retrace the steps of history today; let us seek to go back to the fountain-head of religious truth, the Church of Christ as established by the apostles on the day of Pentecost. How simple, how

pure, how gleaming with truth, we find that institution! The religion of today, though professing to uphold the ideals of the lowly Nazarene, has departed a long way from those ideals.

There has grown up in the minds of many the ridiculous thought that they can hire someone to carry on their obligations to God. They feel that if they contribute enough, pay the assessments heaped upon them, and occasionally go listen to the learned words that fall from the lips of some man, that God will count it as acceptable service! In the early church there was no one-man preacher-pastor system as we find even in some so-called Churches of Christ today. When the early church was persecuted and driven from Rome, the New Testament says, "They that were scattered abroad, went everywhere preaching the Word" (Acts 8:4). Every man who was saved recognized it as his solemn duty to tell others how to be saved! Everyone who had found Christ hastened as did Andrew to find his own brother and bring him unto the Savior. And what was the result? The gospel spread throughout the civilized world of that day. The paganism of Rome attempted to stamp it out by bloody persecution. It swallowed up the realm of the mighty Caesar's and left the gods without worshippers that would support the costly shrines and temples. Slave girls taught their mistresses the way of life, and those haughty mistresses, realizing that their previous search for inward joy had been in vain, gladly accepted the teaching of the Christ, though it meant death at the stake. Men talked Christ along the road, in the marketplaces, on the streets, in their homes! Every person met by a Christian was a prospect, because he had a soul, and souls must be wrenched from the power of Satan and saved for eternity. Farmers left their oxen in the field to preach Christ unto the passersby; men stopped their chariots to pick up Christians who showed them the glory of the Master as they rode along. The church became a conquering force in the world.

What has happened to nullify that power? A great many things. But one of the chief reasons why Christianity no longer exerts its previous influence is that it is being throttled by those who pretend to love it! Today preachers have become professional men! They take a course in a seminary, receive a degree in theology, and then strive, I say it with tears and with shame, to seek

the place paying the most money, offering the greatest social prestige, and there they accept a call, not because of the souls that need saving, but because of the amount of money guaranteed on their contract. Do not misunderstand me! I believe that men who preach the gospel are entitled to support! I believe with Paul that those who minister spiritual things to you are entitled to share in your carnal things; that is, things needed to keep them alive! But I deplore this spirit of professionalism which is fostered by seminaries, encouraged by Bible Colleges, and which today threatens to wreck the church upon the rocks of envy, prejudice and greed. There is too much preaching, and not enough practicing of the religion of our blessed Master. Religion is as much for the pew as for the pulpit. No man, regardless of education or degree, has a copyright on the religion of Christ. No man has a right to say that because I have been to college six years I am a Master in religion, but since you are only a street-cleaner you have no right to tell another about the meek and humble Savior. Let's take religion out of the pulpit, and translate it into life. Let's make it a vital something, belonging to all in the church, and not to the few!

Christ forbids the exalting of men in a religious sense. Listen to His words, "Be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your Master, even Christ, and all ye *are brethren*. And call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in Heaven. Neither be ye called masters: for one is your Master, even Christ. But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant. And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted" (Matthew 23:8-12). So we learn that the disciples of the Master are not to be distinguished from each other by the titles of Master, Father, Rabbi, etc. Does that not then include all titles of a religious nature? Is one man to be revered above another in the church? The essence of the Christian relationship is summed up in the words, "All ye are brethren." When someone in the church wants to be more than a simple brother, he is exalting himself, and the Savior says he shall be abased. I am content if I can only be merely a brother of every man and woman who faithfully serves the Lord Jesus! I ask no title other than that to be applied to my name.

Yet even without acknowledging earthly titles, there is a growing tendency on the part of many to make a distinction between what is called "the clergy" and "the laity"! No such distinctions are found in the New Testament! We are all workers together with God! Once in awhile someone will ask a member of the church, "What must I do to be saved?" The answer will be returned, "Well, really, I am not sure I can tell you. Let's get in touch with my minister and he will show you." How different was it in the days of the New Testament church! Then each congregation had its eldership composed of a body of men who fulfilled the requirements set forth by the Holy Spirit. They fed the church on the bread of life and ruled it according to the New Testament for its good. Paul said to the elders of Ephesus whom he called to Miletus, "Take heed unto yourselves and to all the flock, over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the Church of God, which He hath purchased with His own blood" (Acts 20:28). There was no signboard in front of the meeting-place at Ephesus with the words "Church of Christ—Apostle Paul, Minister." All in the church were ministers in the sense that the word in the Bible means simply "servant." And, people of the Lord, we are all to be ministers of the Lord's Word today. You are responsible before God for the souls that you can save and will not attempt to reach!

The New Testament church had its elders to feed and oversee the local congregations; its deacons to look after the temporal welfare of the needy; its evangelists to carry the gospel to the world about them. But every member was a preacher of the gospel to the extent of ability and within the scriptural restrictions placed upon them according to sex, age and other matters. I'm going to express my sincere view! The church cannot have the influence it should have in this day until we return to the old paths. It is no trouble to convert the world. The big problem before us is to convert the church.

The average member today does not want to study the Bible! He wants to pay someone to study it for him! He does not want to tell others the Word of Life. He wants to pay someone a salary to do that for him! He does not want to care for the orphans in the church! He wants to hire someone to do that for him! He

does not want to visit the sick and destitute. He wants to hire someone to do that for him! He doesn't even want to shake hands with his brethren and sisters. He must hurry home before his dinner gets cold. So he hires someone to greet the brethren in his stead! I wonder if it wouldn't be a good idea to try and hire someone to go to Heaven for you—for I fear if you are not converted, you shall miss it yourself.

WHY WE SING AND DO NOT PLAY

A short time ago, one of our good friends in the radio audience attended a service of the Church of Christ. It was his first time to be present at one of our worship periods. After it was concluded, he sought me out, "I have a question I'd like to ask you," he said. I assured him we would welcome questions about our work and worship from anyone. Gaining assurance that it would not be offensive, he proposed this query, "I find this service today highly interesting," he said, "but I notice the fact especially that you do not use instrumental music in your praise service. I'm wondering if it is due to the fact that you are too poor to purchase a pipe organ, or is it a matter of faith with you?"

I hastened to answer him! Then it occurred to me that there are hundreds of you who have attended and will yet attend our meetings. I'd count it a happy privilege to converse with all of you personally. Yet I'm sure that will never be my lot. Many of you must wonder just why the congregations of the Churches of Christ do not employ orchestral accompaniment, but merely join in united congregational singing. In connection with our lesson today I wish to answer that question which is in your heart.

Singing is a part of worship! It is a command of God! The Churches of Christ believe and teach that when God has commanded a thing, and then told us how to carry out that command, we must not only fulfill the required demand but must do it in a way specified. For when a certain method is incorporated in a command, the method itself becomes a part of the law or command. For example, if a judge sentences a criminal to die by hanging; the specification "by hanging" becomes a part of the sentence. You

could not shoot such a criminal, nor could you electrocute him, for the law demands that he be hanged. Any other method would be a violation of the command.

In our search for the old paths, we must determine what the apostles commanded, and what the early church observed with reference to worship. Then we may take that Spirit-guided example as the basis for our worship today, feeling perfectly confident that we will be doing exactly what God tells us, in exactly THE WAY that he tells us to do it. This will be acceptable service to Him. Nothing else can be!

As a working basis for this search I first make a positive statement. In the New Testament, Christians are commanded to sing, but are nowhere commanded to play upon instruments made with men's hands. First, I call your attention to Ephesians 5:19, "Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your hearts to the Lord." In this command of Paul, there are three actions set forth. They are speaking, singing and making melody! Only vocal music will fulfill the requirements of the first two. Speaking and singing are vocal! But there may be a question about the third, "making melody." It may be asked if we can make melody without some sort of instrument. The answer to that is simply, "No, we cannot." Now, has God told us the instrument we are to use? Has He told us where the melody is to be made? Surely He has. He declares we are to make melody in our heart! Then the command is not only to make melody, but the place and method of doing it is incorporated in the command. This, then, forbids the making of melody by any other instrument or means.

I now turn to another Scripture, this time Colossians 3:16. "Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord." There are again three actions incorporated in this verse. They are teaching, admonishing, singing! Neither of these can be carried out without vocal music. Neither of them can be carried out by humanly devised instruments. Putting these two quotations together, we know now that acceptable praise service as commanded by the Lord must consist of speaking, singing, teaching, admonishing and

making melody in the heart. That is an expression of His desires in the matter. Anything else is beyond what He has requested and thus constitutes an addition to His Word.

Recently I received a most interesting letter from a good friend and listener. She said in the course of her writing that if the New Testament anywhere specified that we were to praise God in a specific way, she would expect to follow out that requirement. I cited her to Paul's writing in Hebrews 13:15, which says, "By Him (Christ) therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to His name." The fruit of our lips! That is the sacrifice of praise which God wants. Will any other sacrifice be pleasing unto Him? We of the Churches of Christ feel that it will not! We prefer to do exactly what he has requested us to do.

I'm sure you recall the story of the first sacrifices ever offered, those by Cain and Abel. Now God commanded a blood sacrifice! Nothing else would fulfill His requirements. Abel brought of the firstlings of his flock a sacrifice unto God, and it was accepted by the Lord. But Cain substituted something else. We can almost imagine what he said. Perhaps he reasoned, "Of course the Lord said we were to offer a blood sacrifice, but then He didn't say we could not offer this other, and beside that, it seems to me that this other way would be just as good." Thus he brought the fruits of the ground? What was the result? I read Genesis 4:4, 5, "And the Lord had respect unto Abel and his offering, but unto Cain and his offering He had not respect. And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell." You will recall the sequel! Instead of appreciating the fact that Abel had shown him the proper way to worship the Lord, Cain became incensed and slew his brother!

Often today I hear men and women say, "We admit that the New Testament does not command instrumental music in our worship, but on the other hand it doesn't say we can't have it." There is nothing to indicate that God told Cain he could not offer fruits of the ground. But He did tell both brothers what sacrifices He wanted, and when one substituted another thing, the Lord was not pleased. Now we have read today that the Lord demands of us as a sacrifice of praise, "the fruit of our lips." Do you think He will excuse us if we bring to him other fruits of sound?

When the great apostle was at Athens, the seat of intellectual culture and philosophy in that day, we hear him say, "God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that He is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed anything, seeing that He giveth to all life, and breath, and all things" (Acts 17:24, 25). Nothing we can invent, nothing we can produce, nothing we can devise will improve the simplicity of the worship of the Lord. He made our voices—He likes to hear them. We made other instruments, perhaps that's why we like to hear them.

But you may ask if the early church did not use instrumental music. Indeed they did not. As a matter-of-fact the first instrument introduced into church music was in about the year 676 A.D., almost seven hundred years after the birth of Christ. Chambers' Encyclopedia informs us in its article on "Music in Churches" that the first organ used in church worship was the one sent by Pope Vitalian I to Pepin, King of Northern France. This organ the king placed in the cathedral at Aix-la-Chappelle. In Klingman's Church History, page 93, we find this, "Organs were introduced in the Western Church about the middle of the eighth century, but were not generally used in the church service until 1290. Some of the sixteenth century reformers considered organs as 'monuments of idolatry.' Many congregations have been divided on account of the introduction of this form of music."

These quotations will suffice to prove that in the early New Testament church, the praise service was simple singing, congregationally carried out. We who today are seeking to restore the New Testament church in its original purity follow the precedent set for us by the apostles and their contemporaries. We ask of you only a careful investigation of our stand in this regard.

OUR MONEY AND THE GOSPEL

The subject of church finance is one which has aroused a lot of controversy in the days gone by! Books have been written on the subject, sermons have been preached on it, churches have been split because of differences regarding it; and it is of such general

interest I am going to take time today to explain the position of the Church of Christ on this issue! Let us seek for the old paths of gospel truth, and determine what procedure the apostles advocated for providing the monetary strength by which the Word of the Lord could be carried to dying humanity.

Before I proceed further I will state that the church is in the world but it is not of the world. Christ said of His disciples, "I have given them Thy Word, and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world" (John 17:14). It is very obvious that the world has no place in the church. We cannot employ worldly methods of gain to carry on the work of preaching the gospel. It is amazing to what extent religious bodies have gone in their mad scramble for money. I recall that in the place where I once lived a church had an annual carnival to raise money on their pastor's salary. On this occasion they turned the church into a place of riot and made a scene of revelry and pleasure out of it.

The pulpit was roped off like a boxing ring, and the pastor and one of the official board sparred with each other in this ring, where they pretended to serve God at other times. Wildly swinging at each other, they attempted to black each other's eye, but of course it was all done in the name of Jesus, so it was all right. They had peanut and popcorn venders, cigarette and flower girls, and fortune tellers. There were booths where you could gamble for prizes, and hot dog stands where you could eat your fill. All in the name of religion! To cap the climax, a blackface minstrel was presented which was viewed from the pews, and some of the jokes by the end-men were close to being vulgar. I ask you this day if you believe the Son of God will sanction such antics carried on in His name?

In many instances it would appear that the chief aim of the church is to amass wealth, regardless of the methods employed in securing it. I remember an occasion when I had to wait for a train in a strange city. As I was strolling down the street to pass away the time, I saw a religious meeting in progress. I stopped to listen to the message. But the speaker announced that he was going to take a collection before he went a bit further. That was the first thing on his program. He declared he needed a hundred dollars that night, and was going to get it before he preached a word of gospel. He started his collection agents out and they got about

sixty dollars. So he sent them back again. Four times he had them pass the plate that night before he got around to his sermon. It was such a disgusting procedure that I was made to wonder why men and women would endorse it. Jesus said that one of the characteristics of His work was found in the fact that "the poor have the gospel preached unto them."

The Churches of Christ take up no collection or offerings except upon the first day of the week, the day referred to as Sunday, and called in the Bible, "the Lord's Day." Our reason for that is that we are so commanded. I read for you, "As I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first day of the week let everyone of you lay by him in store as God hath prospered him" (1 Corinthians 16:1, 2). We believe that this divine order means just what it says, and we expect to abide by it and be governed according to it.

No one is to tell you what amount you can or must give. That is between you and your God. It is unscriptural for a church to assess its membership, or for that membership to pledge. We are to give as God hath prospered us through the week. And we ourselves are to determine the amount of our giving. Let us hear the Bible once again, "Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver" (2 Corinthians 9:7). It stands to reason that a man who is converted to the Lord will want to give freely and generously to the work of the church. You'll not have to rig up some kind of gambling outfit to extract the shekels from his pocket. If he isn't converted, his giving will profit him nothing in God's sight.

There are too many now who think they can buy their way to glory with their hard cash. They want to get all they can out of this world and then attempt to purchase the right to enter Heaven by paying a preacher. But that will not work. Neither will it avail you anything to amass a lot of wealth which should have gone into the Lord's treasury, then when you get ready to die will it to a Christian college, which will bear your name as a memorial and give the board of directors something to fight over, and reflect their ungodly conduct on the church. The Lord's work should be done through the Lord's institution—the church. If you

keep back from it what should have gone into it, then what will it profit you to build up another institution? That's too much like the man who shortchanged a customer five dollars, and then said, "Well, this money doesn't really belong to me, and I ought to do a good work with it, so I think I'll buy me a Bible. I know of nothing better than investing in a Bible." Well, that's true, provided you don't invest the other man's money in it! That five dollars should have been given back to the customer. To do anything else with it was to misuse it. So if you keep back your wealth from the church, don't think God will be pleased if you use what you've shortchanged him and build something else with it! The blessed Bible says, "Unto Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end" (Ephesians 3:21).

Once when I was talking to a man about the matter of Christian giving, he told me that it might work in the Church of Christ to leave it up to each individual as to what he would give, but he declared it would not work where he went. I queried him as to why it would not! "Well," he said, "that system leaves it too much up to the honesty of the individual." He didn't stop to realize that he was affirming that the members in the congregation where he went were so dishonest that you couldn't trust them even to decide how much they owed the Lord. I'm not sure I would want to belong to such a church, for one would not enjoy the services, what with keeping his hand on his pocketbook all of the time. I am certain that if members would steal from the Lord of Heaven, they wouldn't hesitate to pick my pocket if they got half a chance.

The truth of this whole matter is that God has given us a definite scriptural method for taking care of the work of the church and meeting the expense of preaching the Word and relieving the destitute. That way has the authority of Heaven behind it. It was revealed by the Holy Spirit! It was incorporated in the New Testament law! It is a commandment! To disregard it and devise another method is to make human tradition supersede the divine regulation. Jesus said of such that they made void the Law of God, by their tradition, and He further affirmed, "In vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men" (Matthew 16:9). Worship without divine prescription is vain. It is useless! It is empty!

Let us summarize God's plan for paying for the preaching of the gospel and doing all other religious acts. He commands us everyone to give; He says that we are to lay it by in store, which means in the treasury; He says that we are to do this contributing upon the first day of the week. Isn't that simple as outlined in 1 Corinthians 16:2? Now that will support the church if it is practiced! You know it will, for if all were converted to give what they were prospered it would amount to as much as you would get from the same persons for selling chicken suppers, or having fish fries at the church! Then why not let us give it simply and freely as God commanded and keep the shows, carnivals, circuses, restaurants, dances, etc., out in the world where they belong. Let us go to the House of the Lord to worship! Let us go there to reverence God! Let us give Him of our temporal means to support the church, for we are only stewards of His grace after all.

THE LORD'S SUPPER

Our investigation of the practice of the early Church of Christ, as that practice is revealed to us in the New Testament, leads us to the conclusion that a great many departures have been made religiously by our friends in this day. In no department of spiritual activity is that variation more pronounced than in the observation of the Communion or the Lord's Supper. We ask your careful attention to what the Bible teaches on that important topic.

First, we point out that the Communion was ordained by Christ Himself on the night prior to His betrayal and death. I read with you the words of the apostle Paul, "The Lord Jesus the same night in which He was betrayed took bread; and when He had given thanks, He brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of Me" (1 Corinthians 11:23, 25).

We are informed that the Lord's Supper consisted of two emblems, the bread and the fruit of the vine. This constituted the Communion service of the New Testament church. Hear the apostle again, "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the Communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break,

is it not the Communion of the body of Christ?" (1 Corinthians 10:16). Anything more than this on the Lord's table would be an addition to God's divine revelation; anything less would fall short of the divine requirements.

The Communion service was observed by the early disciples. It was a part of their worship. All engaged in it and the man was counted delinquent indeed who would not remember the Savior according to the method set forth in His almost dying request. We learn from Acts 2:41, 42, "They that gladly received His Word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers." The "breaking of bread" is here placed in the same category with prayers and the proclamation of the apostles' doctrine. Is it not strange then that today there are many places which profess to love the Lord, and to follow in His teachings, and yet never gather about His table to commemorate His death?

The question naturally arises in a discussion of this sort as to when this memorial should be carried on. We have only the example of the Spirit-filled apostles, the Spirit-guided church to show us. God makes certain things mandatory by the example of the church in its age of purity and apostolic guidance. If therefore we can determine when the church observed the Lord's Supper in apostolic times, we will know when we today are to keep this service, to be well-pleasing unto God. And we are not to be left groping in ignorance on this point, for I turn to Acts 20:7 to find, "And upon the first day of the week when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow." This is plain. The first day of the week the disciples met to break bread. It was not on Good Friday night, on Ash Wednesday or on Easter Sunday! Such designations are foreign to the New Testament anyway. It was merely on *the first day of the week*.

But that poses another query. How often did they observe it? In reply I mention that under the Old Testament, God gave the command to "Remember the Sabbath day." Did anyone ask which Sabbath? Certainly not! They knew that the Sabbath was the seventh day. Therefore since every week had a Sabbath, they kept

it in remembrance every week. Now Christ has asked us to remember Him by partaking of the bread and fruit of the vine. The church in its apostolic purity did this upon the first day of the week! Just as every week had its Sabbath under the Old Testament, so every week has its first day under the New Testament. Then it is the duty of every Christian to meet upon every first day of every week to remember the death of the Lord Jesus. Not quarterly or semiannually, not upon Easter or Christmas, but upon *the first day of the week*.

How long is the church expected to continue this rite? The Bible makes answer clear and decisive on this matter. The record declares, "For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till He come" (1 Corinthians 11:26). I know that the Savior is coming again. I know that we shall see Him face to face. I know that we shall be like Him when that glad day arrives. But until that time I have a solemn obligation—an obligation to remember Him in His appointed way. I want to be faithful when my Lord comes. I want to be found watching!

That is why I cannot understand why men and women will permit other things to come between them and the Savior's command. The banks of the fishing streams are lined on Sundays; the parks are filled to capacity with a freight of human souls; the golf clubs have their greatest number of sportsmen upon the Lord's Day. Hundreds of you who listen in now have only been awake a few hours, and you slept away the time when the church bells announced the hour of worship at God's House! Yet you claim to love the Lord, you say that you believe He is God's Son! How can you claim to reverence Him and yet take your ease at the very time that He pleaded with you to remember Him? What will you say when you face Him in that great Day? How can you expect to enter Heaven if you are unwilling to sacrifice the least bit for Him on earth? Do you want to have him represent you before the Father's Throne as you represent Him on earth?

There are many of you who may not have the talent to be public proclaimers of the gospel. You may find it impossible to speak before your fellow-men from the pulpit. Some of you cannot sing, you have neither the voice nor the ability to do that. But I want you to know that everyone can preach the death of Christ

to the world, if he will be faithful. Remember that every time you assemble at the Lord's House on the Lord's Day and partake of the Lord's Supper ye do show the Lord's Death. What an eloquent sermon of faith, patience, love and humility you preach as you partake of those simple elements which he so wisely selected as a permanent and indestructible monument!

To be absent from the worship of the church without justifiable reason is a sin. And to deliberately plan, plot and arrange other things at the hour of appointed service is to wilfully sin. Sin, you know, is a transgression of the Law of God. One of His commandments is stated thus, "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is, but exhorting one another" (Hebrews 10:25), and the next verse adds, "For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins." Your absence from the church is a vote to close the doors of the church! God will not hold you guiltless if you forget His Son who asked you to remember Him!

The words of Jesus in giving His Supper to mankind should be ever in our ears, "This do in remembrance of Me." The Lord's Supper is a memorial to the Father, showing Him that we have not forgotten that He so loved the world as to give His only begotten Son. It is a memorial to the Son of God who bore the Cross to Calvary and freely shed His blood from a broken body. It is a memorial to ourselves, renewing and rekindling our minds, charging our spirits with new zeal for service and with new courage to conquer temptations in the days that lie before us; it is also a memorial to the unthinking and unbelieving world about us. We witness to all who see that we believe that Jesus lived, that He died for our sins, that He was buried, that He was resurrected—that He **STILL LIVES**, and that some day He is coming back to receive and reward those who have patiently endured!

And last of all I must mention that this sacred institution binds the hearts of God's children closer together. The very word "communion" means that which is held in common. The Lord's Supper is that common tie which binds us to each other and to our God. May God ever richly bless that tie that binds our hearts in Christian love. And may those of us who today have grown cold and forgetful be inspired by the love of God to return to and remember

the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls. That is our earnest, fervent pray for all who wander from the fold today.

GOD'S PURPOSE AND PLEASURE

Our present world is one of discord, strife and confusion. In the national and international relationship of men, war has involved the entire physical universe. In the business associations of life, strikes are prevalent, accompanied by charges and countercharges hurled by both employer and employee. Domestic relations are becoming more entangled day by day, with the divorce courts filled with cases. We are making a sad and sorry mess of the world which God has given us as a dwelling place.

But it would seem that at least one institution could survive the discord of the day and point to perfect unity and happiness. That institution is religion. Yet in spite of its idealism and ideology, religion has only added to the current confusion, with its modern Babel-like confounding of tongues. Is this condition the one for which Jesus lived on earth, suffering the rebuffs of the world? Is the present state of affairs that for which He suffered the agonizing death of Golgotha? We know that it is not!

I read in 1 Corinthians 14:33, "For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints." It is evident immediately that the Father of us all neither desires nor has produced the bickering which prevails in the religious world today. Nor can it be blamed on His Son, for Jesus prayed as follows, "Neither pray I for these (the apostles) alone, but for them also which shall believe on Me through their word; That they all may be one; as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that Thou hast sent me" (John 17:20, 21).

It was God's purpose from the beginning that we should be one! That also was His pleasure! I read once more, "Having made known unto us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He hath purposed in himself; that in the dispensation of the fulness of times He might gather together in one all

things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth; even in Him" (Ephesians 1:10).

It is true that under the Old Testament age there was a line of demarcation between Jew and Gentile. But the prophets of God looked forward to a golden age, when both should be together in peace and joy. To achieve that great plan, the Son of God freely shed His blood. Let us prove this. Here's what the apostle Paul says, "Now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were afar off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For He is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us . . . for to make in himself of twain, one new man, so making peace; and that He might reconcile both unto God *in one body* by the Cross, having slain the enmity thereby, and came and preached peace to you which were far off, and to them that were nigh. For through Him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father" (Ephesians 2:13-18).

My friends, Jesus died to put an end to racial hatred! He desired to drown forever the grim ogre of race prejudice in the crimson stream which flowed down his riven side! There is no place in His church for blind unreasoning malice against those who have been born on another side of the globe, or whose skin is of a different color! And here and now, I declare my firm conviction that the only permanent peace that can ever come to this world, nauseated from the overdose of its own fighting, is the peace that comes from recognizing the Fatherhood of God, and the accountability of all men unto Him in the judgment. If the Bible were preached, believed and obeyed, it would be impossible to have conflict between capital and labor, employee and employer; yea, there could be no international strife, no race riots, no murders, no crimes of lust! Greed would have its gory, slimy head stricken from its revolting body by the sword of the spirit; and it would no longer be a question of how much can I get out of life, but rather, how much can I share with others. The task of the church today is to point the way to peace; peace purchased not with the blood of our boys, but with the blood of God's Son! Not the peace of a Versailles treaty; but the peace of Calvary!

God gave man in the beginning a beautiful world in which to live. Everything was provided for his pleasure and good. Here

were found in complete abundance those things in their original state which could be fashioned by man's skill into articles of usefulness for humanity. But what has the creature done with the products provided by the Creator? He has taken the iron ore from the hillsides and has fashioned from it huge guns, belching forth sulphuric fumes of devastation. He has tunneled into the bowels of the earth to seek the lead which might be fashioned into bullets to explode in the hearts of God's fellow creatures. He has siphoned the oil which could have lighted the homes of the world, making them bright as the day in the darkest recesses of the night, and has used that precious liquid to drive his hurtling engines of fear and destruction! Man has boasted of his wisdom and knowledge. He has erected churches which required centuries of artisanship to construct, and then has shattered them in a few seconds. He has built schools in which the rich and the poor could sit together for the reception of equal knowledge, and then has sent flaming explosives into those schools, killing and maiming those who came to study! Man has developed his own civilization, and then forsaken it! He has gone back to the law of the jungle, to the law of fang and claw! Stalking his prey like the tiger, he camouflages himself, to slip stealthily from tree to tree, to pounce upon his victim and drive the knife into his jugular vein and drain the rich, warm, red blood from a human body! How long, oh God, will we lift ourselves up in boastful praise of our accomplishments, knowing not that we are destroying all that for which men in centuries past have striven?

What is the cause of all this confusion in a world which should be one vast brotherhood of man? I answer that there can be no common brotherhood, without a recognition of a common Fatherhood! And do not let us point the finger of accusation at the other peoples of the universe! It is true that many of them in their paganism do not worship the One True God. But we can at least admit that they are not hypocrites! They in their heathen ignorance have never known God! But which is worse—never to have known the Father; or having known Him, to return to the base passions of this world, and serve the devil, while giving lip-service to Heaven?

I ask with Paul, "Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?" (Galatians 3:3). Again,

"After that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage?" (Galatians 4:9). It seems to me that the saddest utterance of Jesus was not the one made in Gethsemane, when with agonized voice He exclaimed, "Oh Father, if it be Thy will, let this cup pass from Me." Nor do I believe it was the fervent prayer uttered in writhing anguish on the Cross, "Forgive them for they know not what they do," But to me, the saddest words that ever escaped the lips of Jesus were those words He spake in question form, "Why call ye Me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I tell you?"

God gave us not only a beautiful world physically! He has also provided for us a grand, sublime and simple religion! But what have we done with it? We have made it something to fulfill our baser desires! We have erected temples of pride, from the sweat and toil of oppressed multitudes; we have departed from the spirit of the Master to cater to those who are rich, and have despised the poor; we have written our own puny creeds and dictated our own forms of service, ignoring the pleas of Heaven. And today we find ourselves hopelessly entangled, often crying for unity, only to have the echo of our cry taunt us! Where is the peace and happiness that our spirit craves? Back comes the reply of the prophet of old, "Stand at the crossroads and ask; but be sure and seek for the old paths, and when you have found them, walk in them. Then ye shall have rest for your souls." The Churches of Christ seek to restore the church in its original glory and heavenly luster, as the institution in which all may come together and worship in the beauty of holiness. Will you come and join with us in this great work? The Lord is calling you! Come today!

DAVID'S UNITY SONG

In continuation of our discussion of the unity of those who profess to love the Lord, I wish today to refer to a peculiar description of that unity as shown in the Old Testament. I invite your careful attention then to the reading of one of the smaller Psalms of David—the one hundred thirty-third.

“Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron’s beard: that went down to the skirts of his garments. As the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion: for there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life forevermore.”

In this song, four things are affirmed of the unity of God’s people as follows: it is good, it is pleasant, it is like the anointing oil used to sanctify the high priest, it is like the dew that fell upon the peaks of Mount Hermon. Remember that this is an inspired psalm, and thus these illustrations were given through the wisdom of God and are not merely concocted by man because of their musical or poetical value. If we rightly understand them, we will know how God regards the unity in purpose and spirit of those who love Him. Let us notice these affirmations then in order, and consider their application.

The unity of believers is both good and pleasant! Now there are a great many things in life that are good, but they are not pleasant. I recall that on one occasion when I was a youngster, mother came around with the castor oil bottle and a large spoon. In vain were my protests that I did not like it! The reply was, “You must take it, because it is good for you.” That may be true, but I have yet to see the person who claims that castor oil is pleasant!

Then there are a number of things that appear to be pleasant, but they are not good. I recall that once when I was a mere youngster we spent a part of our time in vacation period with my grandfather on the farm. A neighbor lad wise in the ways of the country came over to play one day. He soon suggested that we go to the orchard and eat green apples. It was a new experience to me, but at his bidding I went to the smokehouse and got a handful of salt from the old barrel that sat in the corner, and we headed for the spot where the apples grew. I plucked one from the tree and sprinkled a little salt on it. The taste was just what my childish appetite craved. I ate another and still another. I recall yet how pleasant was the taste of those apples. I recall other things connected with the incident also.

Vividly do I remember growing white of face, and doubling over with pain. If I had been old enough to know what a will was,

I think I would have made mine then and there, for it was about time. They dosed me, fanned me, and prescribed for me—everything from catnip tea to a heated sad iron on my stomach! There's no question but what those apples were pleasant but I know now they were not good for one.

But unity is both good and pleasant! It is good because it strengthens relationship of the right nature between those who have a common goal in mind. It precludes strife, bickering and quarreling. It helps us to settle our petty difference with clasped hands rather than with doubled fists. It enables us to look each other in the face, and not to talk about each other behind the back. Unity is good because it is of God, and Jesus said that God is good. Discord and strife are but breaths of hell poured out into the hearts of men by Satan. Contention is the smoke screen which shields the underhanded work of the Devil. Unity is heavenly, division is infernal in its origin.

Unity is also pleasant! What happiness there is in those congregations where jealousy never arises, "where heart beats to heart in the work of the Lord." Under such circumstances, we respect and "in honor prefer one another in the service of the Master." Wouldn't you much rather live in a divine atmosphere of tranquillity and happiness than in one of envy and distrust?

The third thing affirmed about unity by David is that it is like the sacred anointing oil which was poured upon Aaron's head and beard and which ran down upon his holy garments. What can the connection be in this instance? First I call to your attention that this oil was compounded according to God's specifications, and no substitute could be used therefor. Let us read, "This shall be an holy anointing oil unto Me throughout your generations, neither shall ye make any other like it, according to the composition of it: it is holy and it shall be holy unto you. Whosoever compoundeth any like it shall be cut off from his people" (Exodus 30:31-33).

So it is with the unity of the Bible. It is prescribed by the Lord himself! It is to be based upon the divinely revealed Word. No man is permitted to draw up a rule or rules by which believers may be united. I find the apostle Paul saying, "There is one faith"

(Ephesians 4:5). Now if we compound other creeds, disciplines and rules of faith, we ignore that which has been provided. The condemnation of Heaven will be upon us for adding to God's Word.

Note also that the holy anointing oil was to set apart the priests to the service of the Lord. The unity of the New Testament does that now. In the gospel age we are all kings and priests unto God! There is no special kingdom of the clergy whose rights and prerogatives it is to offer spiritual sacrifices for us. We must each serve God! In order to do that it is essential that we work together, in perfect harmony and peace. The badge of a Christian is the love he has for his fellow-Christians! Jesus said it was the distinguishing mark of His disciples. "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples; if ye love one another." It is vain to protest that you love Christ if you hate his brethren. It is foolish to say that you love God while you despise His children. Unity of purpose and work sets us apart from the world, as the anointing oil set Aaron apart in his service from those about him.

Lastly, the Psalmist says that unity is like the dew that fell on Mount Hermon, and the mountains of Zion where God commanded His blessing. This may not mean much to us, but if we had lived when David wrote, we would have understood the symbol. Then the land had little rainfall. There were only two rainy seasons of the year, and in between there was often no showers of blessing. Yet God in His providence provided that this should be a land of milk and honey. The heavy dews that fell were almost like rain. They were responsible for much of the fruitfulness of the land. Under their nightly encouragement the vegetation flourished, and the people prospered.

Thus it is with unity! Show me a church which is working together and where the membership love each other as a family; where they meet together, sing together, pray together and study together, and I'll show you a congregation that will flourish, be fruitful in the Spirit and abound unto every good work. Unity is as refreshing as the morning dew! It is as pure and clear. And just as the vegetables in Your Victory garden lift up their wilting leaves when the night dew falls upon them, so do the spirits and hearts of those who are tired of sham, hypocrisy and worldiness

lift themselves up when they are brought into contact with a church where all are striving together for the prize of eternal life, instead of striving against each other, for the praise of this life.

The dews which fell so heavy upon Mount Hermon kept the pools from growing stagnant. So does the blessed unity of heart which comes from a love of God keep the church from standing still, becoming stagnant and breeding discontent and hatred. It is the firm desire of the Churches of Christ to maintain the "unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." We invite you to come take your stand with us, to work for the Master and His promised reward. The Church needs you, your sincere zeal and courage; but most of all, you need the church and its promise of a better world beyond. Come and investigate our plea! Come tonight!

THE STANDARD OF UNITY

When Adolf Hitler first started his campaign to engulf the world by the might of the Wehrmacht, he was startlingly successful for a long time. That was because of the strategy he employed. You will recall that he kept the smaller nations separated in their aims and aspirations, and had the larger nations opposing him debating with each other as to their part in the opposition to the German war machine. Thus he was able to swallow up country after country. But when the Allied powers ceased to look with distrust upon each other, when they joined their forces of men and munitions the picture was changed completely. And thus we see demonstrated once more the age-old proverb, "In unity there is strength."

Unity means life! Disunity means death! That is true in the whole realm of nature! Not long ago a friend showed me a beautiful plant. The blossoms were large and brilliant. That plant had been growing on that spot for at least ten years. It was large, hearty and healthy. A short time later I inquired if it were still blooming. But I was informed that the plant was dead. Some boys of the neighborhood had come in while the neighbor was away and had stripped the branches and torn the shrub, until it was no longer able to stand. These vandals had brought the death of that plant by disuniting its various portions.

What is true in the natural realm is also obviously true in the spiritual! Satan cannot stand against the forces of righteousness working together. The Book says, "Resist the devil and he will flee from you." But this arch-enemy of the human family employs strategy to gain as many and destroy as much as possible. And the cleverest strategy he has ever invented or employed is the keeping of the religious world in a welter of conflicting teaching and denominational bodies. Under those circumstances, we spend our time opposing and arguing with each other, while Satan slips around to the unbeliever, saying, "You can see for yourself that there isn't anything to religion. They all claim to love the same Lord and Christ but they spend their time fighting with each other."

Certainly this was not the desire of Our Father from the beginning. He looked forward to the coming of the Gospel Age, because in it a plan would be offered whereby man could be one in his affection and service to Heaven. But God does not compel us to walk the straight and narrow way. He does not want that kind of blind devotion. He is not a slave driver! But it is the wish of Heaven that we should be united in effort, that our influence might be extended, and our light shine out, so that others would be led to glorify the Father. What kind of unity does the Bible demand?

Listen now to the words of the inspired Paul, "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment" (1 Corinthians 1:10). This entreaty, says Paul, is in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then it is no slight or unimportant matter. "In the name of" means "by the authority of." The authority of heaven beseeches, yea, even commands that we be one. Notice that the verse authorizes four things: We must speak the same thing. There must be no division. We must be perfectly joined together. We must be of the same mind and judgment!

It is plain at first sight that we must have some standard to which all must come in order to provide and to maintain this unity! It is here that the Churches of Christ raise their plea for the New Testament as the only rule of faith and practice. It is our further

contention that if we cannot get together upon that basis we can never get together at all. For everyone of us must admit that God is both wiser and more powerful than man. Surely He would give us the wisest system upon which to unite. And if we cannot agree upon the inspired Word of God, is it possible that we can ever agree upon the uninspired word of man? It may be urged that we have tried unity upon the New Testament and have failed. But that is not according to the facts of the case. We have never really tried that in the religious world. Since the very origin of many religious organizations, they have been shackled to humanly-devised creeds. There has been no opportunity to "stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free": And that is why in all respect we suggest that if some giant hand could sweep away all doctrines and commandments of men, so that everyone could go to his Bible with unbiased and unprejudiced heart, and with consecrated mind, we might soon restore the "One Body" for which the Savior died among all the nations of the earth.

The Church which our Savior died to purchase is non-sectarian and non-denominational. It belongs not to any party, creed or certain class. Its doors are open to the rich and poor; the peoples of all nations find shelter and sanctuary within its portals. An institution so broad that it excludes the Savior is too broad; one that is so narrow that it excludes the New Testament is too narrow! May our attitude ever be then as we attempt to serve the Lord, Speak, Lord, Thy servant heareth." Maye we be content to hear His words and abide in His teaching, for He alone is God and beside Him there is no other.

The objection will be made that we can never be of the same mind! It is argued that our minds run in different channels and there is no common meeting place for them religiously. That is true in so long as we attempt to maintain and defend a supposed right to tell God what we will and will not do. But when all of us are willing to recognize the sovereignty of God, and thus to submit our wishes unto His in every particular, we can be of the same mind. For then it will no longer be a question of what I want, or what you want; but the proposition will be what God wants both of us to be and do. Certainly His Word says the same thing to you that it says to me. The words do not change as you read them, and transpose as I read them. Your Bible reveals the

same facts to be believed as does mine. All that is now required is a simple willingness to be directed by the commandments of the Lord, and upon that basis we can and must be one, if we are well-pleasing unto the Father above.

Now there may be those of you who listen today, and who tell me that you cannot conscientiously accept any of the denominational forms and creedal statements of religion. What shall you do? I am happy to reply to that. You can accept the creed of the New Testament, without thereby accepting any of the formal statements composed by men. Faith in Jesus Christ as the Son of God and Savior of the world constitutes that creed. And no religious body on earth can call it in question. Then you may obey Him in that "One Baptism" which is a figure of the death, burial and resurrection of Christ (Romans 6:4) and the entire religious concourse of the world must admit that you have only done what is right.

If you object to wearing party names and thus perpetuating strife, you can be a Christian—and a Christian only. You need not be called by any other name, title or designation. And once more all of the religious teachers of the earth will be unable to condemn you for the wearing of that name. You may attend and assemble with those who compose the "Church of Christ," with no other church name attached, and all students of the Bible will admit that you are scripturally safe. You need not adopt any book of articles, or human discipline, as binding upon you. You may simply make the inspired New Testament your guide as to work and worship and if you carefully follow it, deviating not one bit, then it is evident that all mankind must admit the wisdom of your course.

And if you prefer not to accept any earthly man as your guide and mentor in life, you may just accept the Savior as your sole exemplar. It is evident that if you pattern your daily conduct according to the precepts which He has revealed, if you follow in His footsteps, no one can dispute the purity of your character, or the wisdom of the course you pursue. In other words, it is possible for you to reject sectarianism in its narrow, self-centered, and often-times arrogant proclamations, and stand fast in the lib-

erty wherewith Christ hath made us free. The Churches of Christ are seeking to do that, with the New Testament as their sole guide in all spiritual matters. Come, and investigate our plea!

LIBERTY IN THE LORD

For the past twelve weeks we have diligently pursued the task of locating for you the old paths of spiritual safety, and marking out the limits of those paths. Our theme for this entire series has been the words of the prophet Jeremiah, "Stand in the ways and see, but ask ye for the old paths and walk therein, that ye may find rest for your souls" (Jeremiah 6:16). Today we bring this group of talks to a conclusion, and next Lord's Day afternoon, we will launch another series. It is well then that we insert at this juncture a brief recapitulation of those things which we have found in the study of the old paths.

God has before laid out for us the course that we are to walk in order to be well-pleasing unto Him. That way is outlined in the great map-book of the soul, the Bible. Deviation from its plain teaching will land us in the swamps of degradation and sin on one side, or lead out into the desert of sectarianism on the other. The Churches of Christ are pleading for all men to take the New Testament—and that only—as a guide. It contains a way that is right and cannot be wrong! It is infallible! Truth is revealed within its pages, and to know that truth is to be free.

Now freedom is one of the most sought after conditions in the world. It is worth more than life! To prove that, I need but point to the boys of the Allied nations who today are wading through muck and mire, through blood and slime, risking their lives hourly, that freedom might be preserved. It was a love for freedom that has produced all of the great uninspired documents of sacred memory in government. They were either written to secure or to maintain that freedom. The Declaration of Independence, The Constitution of the United States, The Bill of Rights; all of these are but expressions of man's unwillingness to remain in servitude or slavery; they are expressions of his aspirations, hopes and fears.

Spiritual freedom is also a craving of the best instincts within us. God recognized that fact, and we hear the apostle Paul declare, "Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherein Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled with the yoke of bondage (Galatians 5:1). The New Testament recognizes that hunger for freedom that is a part of you. So the Lord devised a plan, sealed with the blood of His Son, that makes you answerable unto Him as the supreme sovereign. Your right to be a Christian cannot be determined by a vote of others; your right to tell your fellowmen the way of life cannot be given by human ordination; you are not subjected to the whims and changing fancies of any convention, council, synod or delegates. You are to be a follower of Christ, and His inspired Word is to constitute your one and only guide from earth to heaven.

Yet we must not confuse this liberty of the Christian life with license to do wrong. Liberty in Christ is freedom to serve the Lord; not license to serve Satan. The apostle Paul says, "For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another (Galatians 5:13). You may assert that liberty cannot exist in the same state with service. If one is called upon to serve, he is not at liberty at all. That type of reasoning is illogical. Every person who enters this world and reaches the age of accountability is a servant. He must serve something, and does. The record says, "Know ye not that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?" (Romans 6:16). Now listen to the succeeding verse, "But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness" (Romans 6:18). You who listen this day are either in the bondage of sin, or in the glorious freedom of sons of God. It depends upon your yielding either to Satan or to Christ!

What are the gains to be derived from liberty in Christ? I want to cite a few of them, and ask you to consider their value. First, you have a right to call upon God as your Father. Let us read, "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the Sons

of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father" (Romans 8:14, 15). Next you have the promise of an inheritance beyond this vale of sorrow and tears. I continue to read, "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together" (Romans 8:16, 17). Again I find this, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to His abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead; to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in Heaven for you" (1 Peter 1:3, 4).

Liberty in Christ brings us into the fellowship of all of God's people. Here we can walk with those who are of kindred minds and hearts, the saints of the Lord, who love His Name and His Word. The great apostle declared to the church at Phillippi, "I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy, for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now" (Philippians 1:3-5). Man is a social creature. Under normal circumstances he does not like to be alone! He desires companionship. But such companionship in order to be enjoyable must be compatible. The church is made up of Christians, of those who love righteousness. Here is the finest and best companionship in the world. It is adequate compensation for the slights heaped upon you by the unbelieving world; it is ample repayment for the insults hurled by those who walk in the paths of ungodliness.

There is another word closely linked to the word "liberty." It is hope. It is one of the abiding elements of spiritual existence, and is linked with those other cardinal principles of faith and charity. There is hope in the Lord, but there is none outside of Christ. I feel sorry for that man who goes through life, careless and unconcerned, and then comes down to the valley of the shadow unprepared to meet His God. The yawning jaws of the grave open to engulf him, the death dew lies cold on his brow; and ahead of him is nothing but darkness, gloom and fear.

Yet if one would possess that hope of life beyond, he must now accept the Lord, or be forever conscious of the fact that what he most desired is gone eternally from his reach. All you have is today. Yesterday is gone and gone forever. Tomorrow has not and may never come. Even when it does, it will then be today. "Now is the accepted time, today is the day of salvation." It is thus God's Word emphasizes the importance of the present. Don't come down to death with an agonized cry, "I might have been saved if I had only listened." Remember the couplet from the familiar poem,

*"Of all sad words of tongue or pen,
The saddest are these: 'It might have been'."*

If you are interested only in the pleasures of this life, in the follies of this world, turn before it is too late. The Church of Christ offers you solace for your grief, balm for your broken heart, a refuge from the battering storms of life; but best of all, the hope of that which lies beyond the hills of earthly existence. "Seek ye the Lord, while He may be found, call ye upon Him while He is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord." When the prodigal became tired of his degradation and his life among the swine, he resolved to return to his father's house. He who a short while before would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine ate, now thought of the bread to spare in the father's home. So he went back to his father, intending to become just a servant in the home against which he had sinned.

But the father ran to meet him. He was recognized as a son, and not a servant. Regal preparations were made for him. Rejoicing was had because he who was lost had been found. Friends, there will be rejoicing in the House of God this day, if you will come to Him. Cease to feed upon the husks that the world casts to you. Rise up and assert yourself! Start right now toward that haven which the Savior established for you! He wants you! He's calling for you! He's seeking you! And you can answer that call by humble submission to His divine commandments. We join in the plea to you to come before it is everlastingly too late.