

1-1-1983

Sermon Ideas Which Challenge Christians to Spiritual Growth With Four Sermons on Christian Maturity

David Murphy Tinker

Recommended Citation

Tinker, David Murphy, "Sermon Ideas Which Challenge Christians to Spiritual Growth With Four Sermons on Christian Maturity" (1983). *Western Evangelical Seminary Theses*. 197.
https://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/wes_theses/197

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Western Evangelical Seminary at Digital Commons @ George Fox University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Western Evangelical Seminary Theses by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ George Fox University. For more information, please contact arolfe@georgefox.edu.

A

SERMON IDEAS WHICH CHALLENGE
CHRISTIANS TO SPIRITUAL GROWTH WITH FOUR
SERMONS ON CHRISTIAN MATURITY

A Research Paper
Presented to
the Faculty of the Graduate School
Western Evangelical Seminary

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Divinity

by
David Murphy Tinker
May 1983

**PORTLAND CENTER LIBRARY
GEORGE FOX UNIVERSITY
PORTLAND, OR. 97223**

APPROVED BY

Supervisor: Wayne McCann
May 26, 1983

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
1. INTRODUCTION	1
STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM	1
STATEMENT OF THE PURPOSE	3
JUSTIFICATION FOR THE STUDY	4
LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY	5
DEFINITIONS OF TERMS	6
METHOD	7
FOOTNOTES	9
2. OVERVIEW OF CHRISTIAN THOUGHT	10
PREACHING AREA 1: WHAT IS THEOLOGY?	11
PREACHING AREA 2: WHAT IS THE CHURCH?	13
PREACHING AREA 3: WHAT IS AN ORTHODOX BELIEF?	15
PREACHING AREA 4: WHAT MAKES THE METHODISTS UNIQUE	15
FOOTNOTES	17
3. OVERVIEW OF CHRISTIAN HISTORY	18
PREACHING AREA 1: THE CHURCH IN THE NEW TESTAMENT	19
PREACHING AREA 2: THE CHURCH BEFORE THE REFORMATION	20
PREACHING AREA 3: THE CHURCH DURING THE REFORMATION	23
PREACHING AREA 4: THE CHURCH AFTER THE REFORMATION	25
FOOTNOTES	27

4.	OVERVIEW OF CHRISTIAN RESPONSIBILITY	28
	PREACHING AREA 1: LIVING IN RIGHTEOUSNESS	30
	PREACHING AREA 2: LIVING IN HOLINESS	31
	PREACHING AREA 3: THE BAPTISM OF THE HOLY SPIRIT	32
	PREACHING AREA 4: LIVING AS GOD'S WITNESS	33
	FOOTNOTES	35
5.	OVERVIEW OF CHRISTIAN GROWTH	37
	PREACHING AREA 1: GROWTH THROUGH COMMUNION	38
	PREACHING AREA 2: GROWTH THROUGH BIBLE STUDY	39
	PREACHING AREA 3: GROWTH THROUGH PRAYER	40
	PREACHING AREA 4: GROWTH THROUGH FELLOWSHIP	42
	FOOTNOTES	44
6.	SERMON: LIVING IN RIGHTEOUSNESS	45
	FOOTNOTES	54
7.	SERMON: LIVING IN HOLINESS	55
	FOOTNOTES	65
8.	SERMON: THE BAPTISM OF THE HOLY SPIRIT	66
	FOOTNOTES	74
9.	SERMON: LIVING AS A WITNESS	75
	FOOTNOTES	84
10.	CONCLUSION	85
	FOOTNOTES	86
	BIBLIOGRAPHY	87

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The Bible shows that God does not desire to have individual Christians scattered in a haphazard way throughout the world, but that God wants a people who would proclaim his name around the world. The promise to Abram was that his descendents would become a great nation through which the whole world would be blessed.¹ Moses addressed the people of Israel saying, "The Lord will establish you as his holy people, as he promised you on earth, if you keep the commands of the Lord your God and walk in his ways."² In John 17 Jesus prayed for those who believed in him. They would be his people, his church on the earth. Jesus prayed, "Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world."³ God's plan is for these who believe in Jesus to become the church.

The need to emphasize the people of God cannot replace nor minimize the need of the church to minister and witness to individuals. Much of the teaching of Jesus stresses the need for the individual to have his/her sins forgiven. In speaking of himself, Jesus said, "The Son of man came to seek and to save what was lost."⁴ In another place he said, "I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners."⁵ Scriptural examples of the forgiveness of sins can be seen in the healing of the paralytic⁶ and the forgiving of the sinful woman at the house of

Simon the Pharisee.⁷ In both examples Jesus noted that the faith of those involved was the reason that sins were forgiven. Salvation comes when the sinner begins living life with faith relationship to Jesus. This emphasis on the salvation of individuals was to be continued by the church.

In his final words, Jesus included the great commission, saying, "Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you."⁸ In this way Jesus passed the work of proclaiming forgiveness which he began to the church. Much of the proclamation of the gospel requires the witness of the individual Christian to their unbelieving friends. This should be considered the work of one member of the church toward accomplishing the church's goal of reaching the world for Christ.

The Christian must therefore be seen in two ways. First, the Christian is seen as an individual committed and consecrated to the Lord Jesus Christ. As such, an individual Christian will develop a lifestyle pleasing to the Lord, a lifestyle which draws the Christian closer to the Savior every day. The Christian will also maintain a relationship with the family and the community within which the Christian works and lives, a relationship which will glorify God and earn respect for the Christian.

Secondly, the individual must be a part of the church. In the New Testament the church is described by several metaphors. The church is the church of God,⁹ the kingdom of God,¹⁰ the people of God,¹¹ the body of Christ,¹² and the building of God.¹³ Each of these word pictures show the solidarity which the individual Christian has with the church. A kingdom contains many parts, each of which is important.

Each Christian is a part of the church. Each Christian has a God given job which is his or her privilege to perform within the church.

Each one reached for Christ must be brought to maturity in Christ. This maturity, when achieved, will see the individual actively involved in the local church and strong in faith. It is God working in and through the lives of those in the church which will be the greatest witness to the unbelieving world of the power of God. As David Watson wrote, "This will always be the most attractive and persuasive argument for the reality and relevance of God: a sense of his presence in the midst of his people."¹⁴

I believe that many individual Christians have had a very difficult time finding and accepting the role God has given them to fill in the local church. I believe some Christians move from one local church to another trying to find a place where they can be an active part of the Church. Another indication of this problem is the number of individuals who give their lives to Christ, but never become active in the local church nor advance in their spiritual lives. The problem of helping the infant Christian grow to maturity will be addressed in this paper.

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The purpose of this paper is to provide a series of sermons which will help give an overview of the church as it is found on earth. This overview will deal with Christian Thought and Belief, Christian History, Christian Duty, and Christian Growth. The new Christian will be able to gain understanding as to what it means to be a Christian and what it means to be a part of the church as the basic doctrines of the church are examined. The Christian will see individuals working within the church and sometimes against the local church in the history of

Christianity. Those who believe in Christ will be challenged to become Christian in lifestyle as the topic of Christian Responsibility is presented. Finally the Christian will be challenged to spiritual growth as the means of grace are examined.

JUSTIFICATION FOR THE STUDY

In order for the Christian to become mature, an understanding of this new relationship with Christ must be achieved. First, a theological understanding is needed. What does God expect of his people? What is the church? What is theology? The answers to these questions can provide a foundation for greater participation in the Christian community.

A second way the individual is related to Christ is historical. The death and resurrection of Jesus is historical. The church has been in history for almost two thousand years. The new Christian needs to understand the working of the church and the local church down through those two thousand years. The Christian needs to see the heroes of Christianity as they stood faithful in the face of persecutions. The Christian needs to feel the love for Christ of those who separated themselves from the world at the time when the local church was so bound to the world it could scarcely be called the Church of God. The Christian needs to know the faith in Christ which made the reformers choose to trust God's Word instead of the traditions of the local church.

A third way that the Christian must understand this new relationship to Christ is in respect to the new life faith brings. How does the righteousness which is from God come to reality in the life of the believer? The Bible speaking of giving good gifts says, "How much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him?"¹⁵ What does this gift of the Holy Spirit and the idea of holiness mean to

the believer? How should the challenge of the Great Commission affect the believer? How can the believer most effectively become a servant of God?

The Christian must also be concerned with how to grow mature in Christ. Bible reading, prayer, fellowship, and communion have all been given as means of grace. Through these means, the Christian can draw nearer to God and find greater spiritual power.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This paper cannot provide sufficient sermons or sermon ideas to adequately cover the vast topics mentioned. It is not the intent to try. Rather the intent is to provide a few ideas in each area and four sermons written in manuscript form in order to challenge others to take the subject seriously. The sermons suggested will be more topically oriented than expositional in nature. It is hoped that the topic sermons presented will challenge ministers and laypersons, new Christians and old Christians, into deeper studies of the Scripture. Four units of ideas will be presented. The first unit will be on Christian thought, the second on Christian history, the third on Christian responsibility and the fourth on Christian growth. Each unit will be divided into four preaching areas. Chapters two through five of the paper will present an overview of these unit's idea along with some sermon starter ideas for each preaching point.

Chapters six through nine will provide manuscript sermons for the four preaching areas under Chapter 4, Christian Responsibility. Chapter ten will be the summary.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Church is to indicate the concept of the body of Christ on earth. Its membership is those who by faith have received Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior and are striving to live their life under his leadership.

Local Church is to indicate the church as it exists on earth. Its membership is composed of a mixture of those who are trusting Jesus and striving to live for him, those who for one reason or another claim to be trusting Jesus but in reality are not, and finally those who make no claims as to trusting in Jesus nor of striving to live for him, but who do frequently attend the meeting and services of a local church. The local church should be the representative of the church on earth, but when controlled by those who do not have a living faith in Jesus, the local church may only be connected with the church by the name it uses.

Theology is the study of God.

Orthodox is the standard understanding of a scriptural idea.

Responsibility/Duty. These terms indicate the behavior which should be a natural outgrowth of the sinner's act of faith in Christ. For the non-Christian, responsibility or duty is that which is due or owed another.

Righteousness is being in the proper or right relation with God and man.

Holiness is the act and/or the position of being separated for God's service.

Communion is the service in remembrance of the death of Jesus.

Sanctification is the dedication of a thing to God and His

service. In regard to the individual Christian there are four aspects of sanctification, namely initial sanctification, positional sanctification, progressive sanctification and entire sanctification.

Initial sanctification is the washing away of the sins of an individual which takes place when that individual places his faith in Jesus Christ (Revelation 1:5).

Positional sanctification is the position of being accounted right because we have been given a righteousness from God (Romans 3:28).

Progressive sanctification involves the commitment of the individual to becoming that which God desires him to be. The choice to believe Jesus is the first major step of progressive sanctification.

Entire sanctification is the commitment made by the Christian to be a living sacrifice.

METHOD

This paper is an outgrowth of the pastoral experience of its writer. The experience was prior to his formal seminary training. The need for new members of the church to understand the church as the body of Christ in history and not simply as the small local church was not being met in the official membership training program, so I began a series of sermons to supplement that training.

The general preparation for writing this paper includes all of the work I have completed at seminary. The more specific work included organization of topics of interest into unit and preaching areas which could be presented in a logical sequence of sermons. The sermon ideas are drawn from general knowledge along with some specific study. An historic person such as Francis of Assisi was studied to show how the Scripture motivated him to action in his historic situation in order to

glorify God. Concepts such as prayer was studied to show how it is important in the life of a Christian today.

The manuscript sermons were formed by a research of Scripture dealing with their topic, and reading of authorities on the topics. One of the Scriptures was chosen to be the text for the sermon. This Scripture was then studied and used as a base for an expository sermon.

FOOTNOTES

¹Genesis 12:2-3. This quote and all other Scripture quotations will be from the New International Version unless otherwise noted.

²Deuteronomy 28:9.

³John 17:17-19.

⁴Luke 19:10.

⁵Matthew 9:13.

⁶Luke 5:20.

⁷Luke 7:48.

⁸Matthew 28:18-20.

⁹I Corinthians 1:2.

¹⁰Matthew 13:33.

¹¹I Peter 2:10.

¹²I Corinthians 12:27.

¹³I Corinthians 3:9.

¹⁴David Watson, I Believe in the Church (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1978), p. 124.

¹⁵Luke 11:13.

Chapter 2

OVERVIEW OF CHRISTIAN THOUGHT

The title of this chapter implies several things about the contents of the chapter. The word "thought" places the contents into the sphere of reason. Webster's Seventh New Collegiate dictionary defines thought as "the action or process of thinking...a reasoning power; something that is thought..."¹ So it is, that this chapter contains an emphasis upon the reasoning ability and the conclusions reached by man.

The word "Christian" serves to define what kind of person is doing the reasoning and what kind of conclusions can be reached. Christian thought is related to Jesus Christ and/or the Christian religion.² The person who is involved in Christian thought should be one who has placed his or her faith in Jesus Christ and who now has a personal relationship with Him. However, one must be always on guard against being deceived by the teachings of those who claim to be of the Christian religion, but do not have a personal relationship with Christ.

The other key word in the title is "overview". This informs the reader that the topic of Christian thought will not be handled in detail. The four preaching areas presented in this chapter are presented to provide an opening to the world of Christian thought. Christianity is not a religion of rituals and magical powers. There are some rituals but they serve as a remembrance of the actions of God on behalf of man, rather than as an instrument used to win the favor of God. There are some

supernatural forces, but these forces cannot be controlled by magical methods. Instead, the primary message of Christianity centers on the loving concern of God. Man, God's creation, has failed to believe God and has fallen victim to sin. Because God loves man, He chose a plan to redeem man. This plan he revealed through his word, the Bible, and the life of his son Jesus Christ. God desires to guide the man and woman, boy and girl, who is willing to trust Jesus into a life of joy and satisfaction. The attempt to understand God's word and the life of Christ, and to apply the Bible and what is known of the teachings and life of Christ, calls for the Christian to become acquainted with the field of Christian thought.

PREACHING AREA 1

WHAT IS THEOLOGY?

Webster's dictionary defines theology as the "rational interpretation of religious faith, practice, and experience."³ Any attempt of a Christian to express what he believes or to find guideline by which to live is theology. This is important to every Christian for every Christian is called upon to live a personal relationship with the Savior.

The members of the local church should be encouraged to recognize and use the different areas of theology. J. Barton Payne says the four major theological disciplines are 1)exegetical, 2)historical, 3)systematic, and 4)practical.⁴ The minister and lay leaders should help the membership realize that the theologians of today are presenting ideas which will affect the church tomorrow. Introduce the layperson to what is being thought today, so that, they can be prepared to see the

truth and reject the error. Otherwise the Christian may unthinkingly drift along peacefully with the trend their local church follows rather good or bad.

Exegetical theology is concerned with the proper interpretation of the Scriptures. Teach the members the principles of Bible study. Biblical sermon series can provide great insights on proper Bible study methods. When preaching on Luke, consider a sermon on the Pharisees. Show how they directed their lives with man-made rules rather than by faith. A sermon on the triumphant entrance could show how Jesus was coming as Prophet, Priest, and King, and application could be made to the man in the pew. Each of these ideas represent exegetical theology sermon topics. They call for the Scripture to be studied and interpreted so that application can be made to the lives we live today.

Historical theology studies the thought of leaders of Christianity beginning with Peter and Paul and continuing through today. When Martin Luther read the words from which sprang his leadership of the reformation, it was the Bible from which he read. The pastor today could study the life of Luther and show the difference those words of scripture made within his life and then make application for his church today.

Systematic theology is the topical study concerning the Christian life. One might ask what the infilling with the Holy Spirit does in the life of an individual. This question would call for a systematic study of the teachings concerning the Holy Spirit. The attempt to systemize all the teaching of Scripture into a statement which explains holiness, or the nature of God, or the atonement of Christ is systematic theology.

Practical theology is the term used to express those studies

which aid the gathering and proclamation of God's truth. Teaching how to study the Bible by showing the development of a Bible study within the framework of a worship service might not be classified as a proper sermon, but it could have real value to the members. Another area of practical theology is the field of homiletics, that is the study of preaching. Homiletics is useful in making the spoken message such as can be understood to the members and applied to the local situation.

Preaching from the area of theology can be rewarding and helpful. But it should be remembered that one of the purposes of theological preaching is to introduce the members to theology. It is important for those who attend the local church to realize the practical nature of theology. It may not be possible to understand every writer of theology but it is important to be on guard and aware of theological trends. Someday the Anti-Christ will come and his prime objective will be to deceive the world in what it believes. Therefore each member must be challenged to find a sound position for the Christian faith.

PREACHING AREA 2

WHAT IS THE CHURCH?

To what church do you belong? The answers to this question are numerous. Some people would answer by naming the local congregation where they attend. Others would give the name of the denomination to which they belong. The intent of the often asked question is to receive an answer which would identify either the location where one attended church or the type of worship and beliefs in which one participated.

For the unchurched person, the fact that the question can be answered in such variation may present a great barrier to understanding

the nature of the church and the message of the church. Jesus Christ was one person. His followers were one group. Yet today Christianity consists of groups called the Church of God, the Church of Christ, the Church of the Nazarene, the Methodist Church, the Baptist Church, the Christian Church, the Mormon Church. And so on, and on, and on, the list of different churches and denominations could go. What answer should a Christian give when asked about the division and disputes within Christianity? The place to begin, when searching for the nature of the church, is not with a study of denomination. As Ray Stedman wrote, "The truth is, of course, that no religious organization or denomination is or can be the true church."⁵ The place to begin is with a study of God's word.

In the Scripture we see that the church is seen as united, even though it is located in different areas. In John's vision he was told to write to the seven churches,⁶ but these were not separate churches. They were united in Jesus Christ even though they were located in seven different cities. Paul, in his letter to the church at Corinth wrote, "to the church of God in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be holy, together with all those everywhere who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."⁷ In this way Paul emphasized that the church was one church even though it might be located in different places.

The members of the local church should be taught the characteristics of the church as presented in the Scriptures. John 17 contains the prayer of Jesus for those who believe in him. This is Scripture which can be used to preach on the church. The different metaphors used to describe the church could each provide an interesting sermon into the nature of the church. Imagine how helpful a sermon on the army of God or one of the body of Christ could be in teaching the work of the church

under Christ.

PREACHING AREA 3

WHAT IS AN ORTHODOX BELIEF?

Webster dictionary defines the word "orthodox" as meaning, "confirming to established doctrine; conventional."⁸ One might ask if there is anything established within the Christian Church. A pause to reflect will cause one to think of several things which could still be called orthodox beliefs. That Jesus Christ is the Lord and Savior of those who trust in him is one such doctrine.

The preaching associated with this preaching point needs to stress the consistency of the doctrine down through the years. The subject needs to be presented as a truth which has been true throughout the history of the church. This is not to say that those who challenged the doctrine should be totally ignored. The corrupted ideas could be used to demonstrate the importance of the true belief.

PREACHING AREA 4

WHAT MAKES THE METHODIST UNIQUE?

This area is to connect the Methodist Church and its descendants with the New Testament Church. It is the application sermon of this unit. The first sermon showed theology to be the search for Christian truth and the teaching of Christian truth. The second sermon showed that the church is the body of Christ at work on earth. The third sermon showed the sureness of Christian truth through the years. Now this fourth sermon shows the place of the Methodist church and its descendants as a

local church.

The Methodist revival spread rapidly because of three factors. One of these was an emphasis on nurture. A second, was an emphasis on field preaching. The Scriptural supports for these factors might be studied and presented in sermon form.

Another idea would be to study the doctrine of holiness or entire sanctification and present it within historical context. This doctrine is also presented for explanation in the unit on Christian responsibility found later in this paper.

FOOTNOTES

¹Webster's Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary (Spring Field, Massachusetts: G. & C. Merriam Company, Publishers, 1963), p. 920.

²Ibid., p. 148.

³Ibid., p. 915.

⁴J. Barton Payne, The Theology of the Older Testament (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1962), p. 19.

⁵Ray Stedman, Body Life (Glendale, California: Regal Books, 1972), p. 4.

⁶Revelation 1:11.

⁷I Corinthians 1:2

⁸Webster, Op. cit., p. 596.

Chapter 3

OVERVIEW OF CHRISTIAN HISTORY

The overview of Christianity and the overview of Christian history are not the same. Within the history of Christianity one can find false teachings, such as were taught by the Ebionites who said that Jesus was "merely a man, a prophet, a spokesman for God, as were the great Hebrew prophets of the past."¹ Within Christian history one sees those committed to Christ putting their faith to work in life. The pre-supposition with which I approach this chapter is that throughout Christian history, God has seen his name glorified and the church enlarged in the world.

The four preaching areas presented in this chapter cover the span of Christian history. The sermons suggested are intended to give an understanding of the way God was working with his people in Christian history. God's word and God's spirit can be seen giving new life and hope to individuals even in the dark periods of the church. The four preaching areas to be presented are, first, the church in the New Testament; second, the church before the reformation; third, the church in reformation, and fourth, the church after reformation.

PREACHING POINT 1

THE CHURCH IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

This sermon should catch the spirit of the New Testament evangelism and faith as it proclaimed Jesus Christ as the representative of God to man. Jesus Christ was proclaimed to be the way and the truth and the light. The gospel message was proclaimed in contrast to the popular philosophies of the day. In Judaism, the Pharisees taught a life bound by rules. This life was to be lived in order to win God's favor. The gospel proclaimed a life changed through a personal relation with God. This relationship was to be entered through faith in Jesus Christ. In Greek mythology the favor of the god's was to be won by abundant sacrifices. The gospel message proclaimed the favor of God revealed in Jesus Christ, the giver of the abundant life.

The years beginning with the teachings of Jesus and ending around 500 B.C. were years of persecution and victory. The early believers proclaimed with joy the abundant life they had found through faith. The message was often rejected and the messenger persecuted. Jesus was crucified by the teachers of Jewish legalism. The worshipers of the Goddess Diana sought the death of Paul. The Caesars of Rome desired to stamp out Christianity. Yet the truth of the Christian message spread throughout Jerusalem, Judea, the nation of Israel, and the Roman Empire. Indeed the message that Jesus Christ frees men from their sins continued to spread beyond the boundaries of the Roman Empire.

One sermon might well present a Biblical study of the life of Paul. The power of the gospel as it touched Paul's soul and changed him could well illustrate the multitude of changed lives which came because of faith in Christ during this time of history. Yet Paul's life as a

Christian was never a simple nor comfortable life. Paul was constantly faced with the threat of persecution. The life of Paul showed that he never feared the persecutions which man might give. His dream, his goal was to complete the task which his Lord and Savior had laid before him.

Or perhaps one might preach using Romans 13:11-14 as a text. This text was important in the conversion of Augustine (354-430 A.D.). Augustine was troubled by his lack of self-control. He searched for a true religious experience in the religious teachings of his day, but found freedom only when he read Romans 13:11-14. The verses read,

And do this, understanding the present time. The hour has come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed. The night is nearly over; the day is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy. Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of your sinful nature.

In preparing this message, the minister could reveal some of the religious teachings which did not satisfy Augustine. He could show how the Christian message gains victory over these untrue teachings by giving victory in life to Augustine.

PREACHING AREA 2

THE CHURCH BEFORE THE REFORMATION

The time period which this area covers begins at approximately 500 A.D. and continues until approximately 1500 A.D. This period could be called "the local church becomes a world power." The church as the body of Christ had won acceptance by the Roman government. Then it achieved various degrees of recognition as the official local church of the Roman Empire. This combination of spiritual/political power allowed

the Roman Catholic Church to continue to spread the gospel message and to continue to increase in political power even though the Roman Empire was to lose influence.

The spiritual growth of the church took two directions. First, the church grew geographically. That is, the area of the world in which the gospel was proclaimed became larger. The barbarian tribes which invaded the northern and western part of the Roman Empire settled in the areas they captured. Soon a successful effort was underway to share the gospel in the northern countries. The acceptance of Christ in these areas allowed the political power which the local church held in the Roman Empire to be extended.

The southern part and eastern portions of the Roman Empire was being invaded by the Moslems. Again the gospel was proclaimed but not as successfully. The Moslems who believed were highly persecuted.³ Gradually the church lost members in the area controlled by the Moslems, however these losses were smaller than the gains made in the north and west.

The second type of spiritual growth which took place was an anti-culture movement. The monastic movement actually began with Anthony around 250 A.D. Throughout the years 500-1500 A.D. monasticism was a basic emphasis within the local church. The monastery was a Christian community. Different monasteries had different purposes. Some were developed as places for service, some as places of learning, and some as places of worship. Whatever the primary purpose of the monastery, they all provided the individual Christian the opportunity to withdraw from the pressures of the outside life so that the Christian could draw closer to God.

Politically, the local church was able to gain power as the Roman Empire lost power. The climax of the power of the local church was reached when Innocent III was Pope. He reigned from 1198 to 1216. During these years, the Pope possessed such power that he could dictate to the kings of the nation. Innocent III felt that God had ordained both the pontification and the royal power, as he had the sun and the moon, and that as the latter draws its light from the former, so the royal power derives its dignity and splendor from the pontifical.⁴

Unfortunately, the political power of the local church was often in the control of men with little spiritual life. During those times corruption was widespread and the local church brought disgrace to the name of Christ. The political power of the Pope began to decrease gradually after the reign of Innocent III. The spiritual life of the church also began to falter. The combined political and spiritual decline was greeted by individuals who turned to the Bible seeking, finding, and proclaiming the basic message of the gospel. These individuals were the forerunners of the Reformation.

Biographical sermons may be built around the lives of Benedict, Pope Gregory I, Bernard of Clairvaux, Francis Assisi, or Peter Waldo. The movements which grow out of Scripture were the Cistercians, and the Franciscans. The sermon should show Christianity standing in political chaos. It should also show that even though the local churches were basically united in the Roman Catholic Church still the local church was earthly. The Church on earth has always been highly influenced by the spiritual life or lack of spiritual life as the case may have been of its local leaders.

PREACHING AREA 3

THE CHURCH DURING THE REFORMATION

The Reformation was a result of several interacting forces. The Turkish invasion caused a weakening of the church as a political, governing force. The rise of nationalism caused even further loss of political control as the various local leaders tried to gain control of the local church within their area. So in one sense the Reformation was a political struggle for power.

The Reformation also saw a basic change in philosophy. The common understanding of Kings and Pharaohs were that they were gods. The people thought that their knowledge and power as gods made them natural leaders. With the fall of the Roman Empire the leaders of Christianity became the natural leaders. This leadership was not because they themselves were gods, but because of their positions as representatives of God. In the Reformation a new emphasis on learning was seen. People were thought to be capable of knowledge based on their reasoning abilities. This knowledge would provide a better means of living on earth as more and more knowledge was gained and the scientific method of learning was improved. The knowledge needed to live pleasing to God would be gained by personal Bible study. Before the Reformation, the Pope was the primary authority in dictating (1) the life style of the individual and (2) the proper understanding of the Bible. After the Reformation, the Pope was challenged for this authority. Science has claimed more and more authority for dictating life on earth. The new Protestant church presents the Scriptures as interpreted by each individual as the authority for spiritual guidance.

The Reformation therefore was more than just a split within the church. The Reformation was the adaption of Christianity to a new culture. The great historian an Christian history Kenneth Scott Latourette gives four generalizations concerning the reformation. First, the reformation was a movement which could be seen in the Catholic Church as well as in the new Protestant church. The movement sought to make the local church truly the church of God. Latourette said that both the Protestant and the Catholic reformation "sought to cleanse the Church and to bring it to a closer approximation to the Christian ideal."⁵

The second generalization given by Latourette points out that the difference between the Catholic reformation and the Protestant reformation was the question of papal authority. The Catholic reformers, Latourette said wanted a "thorough and basic moral transformation of both clergy and laity."⁶ This transformation would reform the life of the established church while maintaining the established doctrine. On the other hand, the Protestant reformers rejected the authority of the Pope to interpret the Scriptures for all Christians.

The third generalization notes that those geographical areas which were in the Roman Empire and had been assimilated to the Latin culture remained loyal to the Church of Rome. This points out how important culture was in the Reformation. Latourette said, "In a sense the emergence of Protestantism was a reaction of Teutonic peoples against religious control from the Latin South."⁷

The fourth generalization given by Latourette recognizes the class differences represented by the reformers. Latourette wrote,

The fourth generalization one which also carries . . . a contrast between the Protestant and the Catholic reformation is that the first sprang chiefly from the lower social strata and the aristocracy. . . .most of the outstanding creators of Protestantism were of peasant or very humble

birth. . . .almost all the leaders of the Catholic reformation were from the nobility.⁸

Sermon ideas for this preaching area have as many options as there were reformers. One might study the life of the Catholic reformer, Ignatius Loyola to find what guided him to dedicate himself as a soldier of Christ. Or one could use Romans 1:17 as a text and show how the words, "The just shall live by faith," changed the life of Martin Luther. John Calvin, because of his study, was to say, "We are justified not without, and yet not by work."⁹ A sermon on the Scriptures most influential in Calvin's commitment to Christ could be helpful.

PREACHING AREA 4

THE CHURCH AFTER THE REFORMATION

Following the reformation, Christianity saw fracture after fracture after fracture as denominations were split and new groups were begun. These splits, however, were symbolic of the emphasis upon the individual working out one's own salvation through faith in Christ. Some individuals sought a relationship with God based on faith and maintained in the intellectual life. Samuel Taylor Coleridge said that the "Christian faith is the perfection of human intelligence."¹⁰ Coleridge taught individuals to place their faith in God then live life as best they understood it. Others sought to live a life of faith based on a literal understanding of God's word. John Darby led a group of Christians dissatisfied with the "worldiness and spiritual dryness of the existing church,"¹¹ and began a new local church. In this local church, the Christians "endeavored to take the Bible literally and to gather themselves together on the model of the New Testament."¹² They set up a highly regulated local church and lived a highly regulated life. Still others lived a life of faith in Christ which

emphasized ministering to both physical and spiritual needs. William Booth left the Methodist New Connection Church to form the Salvation Army.

Despite the many new denominations, Christianity has maintained a degree of unity. Methods and organization has varied, but the goal of Christianity has remained the same. The good news of the gospel has been proclaimed. The life of holiness has been sought. The attempt to reduce the needs and hurts of the world has been undertaken throughout the history of the church. The historian Latourette said this unity has been a great resource against the "age-old problems of hunger, famine, war, and pestilence."¹³ The world has seen a great deal of divisions with the local church, but in the true church a unity can be seen.

Sermon ideas to show what God has done and continues to do in this age can be found in the Scriptures which gave inspiration and new life to Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Charles Spurgeon, John Scott Lidgett, John Nelson Darby, William Booth and many other great leaders of the last two hundred years of Christianity.

FOOTNOTES

¹Kenneth Scott Latourette, A History of Christianity, Vol. I, Beginnings to 1500, Revised Edition (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, Inc., 1975), p. 121.

²John 14:6.

³Latourette, op. cit., p. 320.

⁴Ibid., p. 483.

⁵Ibid., p. 698.

⁶Ibid.

⁷Ibid., p. 699.

⁸Ibid., p. 701.

⁹Ibid., p. 755.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 1172.

¹¹Ibid., p. 1185.

¹²Ibid.

¹³Ibid., p. 1506.

Chapter 4

OVERVIEW OF CHRISTIAN RESPONSIBILITY

The original title for this chapter was to be "Overview of Christian Duty." The reason I change the word duty to responsibility is due to the legal requirement which duty implies. The Random House Dictionary defines duty as "that which one is expected or required to do by moral or legal obligation."¹ Note the unbending obligation which duty demands. A person with a duty to do something must do that thing or else he can be found guilty of neglect. The driver of the car has a duty to stop at intersections marked by a stop sign. The classic Greek word study, The Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, which is nicknamed Kittel's tells us that Old Testament use of the Greek word *ὁφείλω* or duty was used to refer to binding obligation. Deuteronomy 15:2 refers to a man's duty to God which is fulfilled in the sacrifice of purification. This legalistic understanding of duty is an Old Testament concept.

The meaning of duty begins to change in later Judaism and has a different meaning when used by Jesus. The Jews realized that the debt that man owed God was too large to be paid. Kittel's says, "Jesus, who teaches his disciples to pray for remission perceives how impossible is the way of compensating for bad deeds by good deeds."³ Therefore, when the New Testament talks about duty, it is not talking about those things in life which qualify a person for eternal life. Eternal life cannot be

the result of fulfilling one's duty. Eternal life is a gift, which God gives those who believe in Jesus. Duty, in the New Testament understanding, is to be found in the freedom in living which occurs because of the miracle of grace through faith in Jesus. Kittel said, "New Testament ^ὁφειλόμενος does not lead into external imposed legalism, but to Christian commitment, the New Testament imperative, develops out of salvation already known."⁴

Duty in the English language does not express this concept as well as the word responsibility. The Random House Dictionary defines responsibility as meaning "answerable or accountable, as for something within ones power, control or management."⁵ The message of the Gospel states that Jesus will change the life of man. Jesus condemned the Pharisees because they were so bound by trying to obey the law that they would not allow God to change their lives. One Bible handbook says of the Pharisees, "Their supreme concern and delight was to keep the law in every exact detail."⁶ Jesus said, that the Pharisees cleaned "the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence."⁷ Paul wrote, "We maintain that a man is justified by faith, apart from observing the law."⁸

The change brought about by belief in Christ does not allow the Christian man to remain a slave to sin. Romans 6:6-7 reads, "For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be rendered powerless, that we should no longer be slaves to sin because anyone who has died has been freed from sin."

The change which belief in Christ brings is one of opportunity. Paul wrote, "therefore, . . . in view of God's mercy, . . . offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God."⁹ Life for the Christian has one main goal, which is to live pleasing to God. Out of

this goal comes a desire to avoid sin, for sin hinders living for God. Joseph J. Edwards wrote a chapter entitled "The Truly Happy Man" which is part of a book entitled A Call to Christian Character. He wrote,

The "happy man" knew that the way of God (wisdom) was the best of all possible lives and that the way of the ungodly (folly) was the worst. Life for him had two sides: One, the unhesitating acceptance of and enthusiastic participation in godliness, and the other, the struggle against every effort to destroy the work of God.¹⁰

Christian responsibility as it is understood in the New Testament is built upon the foundation of faith in Jesus Christ. It is the ability to serve God in word, thought, and action. It is expressed in opportunities to honor God in thought, worship, service, and witness. Christian responsibility is not subject to the law for it begins where the law ends.¹¹ The law tells what cannot be done,¹² Christian responsibility tells what can be done. Christian responsibility is not subject to sin, for when sin seeks to destroy our relationship with God, Christian responsibility seeks to draw us into a closer relationship with God.

PREACHING AREA I

LIVING IN RIGHTEOUSNESS

Alexander Solzhenitsyn contrasted the legal systems of the United States and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. He noted that both systems were not sufficient. He said, "I can testify that a society with no other scale but a legal one is less than worthy of man."¹³ God created man in perfect fellowship in the world, but this fellowship was broken by sin. Now God offers man a new fellowship, a fellowship based on righteousness, but not the righteousness which comes by the efforts of man. This righteousness is from God. It is righteousness

which is received by faith. It is righteousness which is seen in life.

The sermons preached in this area should proclaim the basic gospel message that Christ can set men free from their sins. The text I will later develop in manuscript form takes Romans 1:17 as its text. The healing of the paralytic in Matthew 9:1-8 could also be used to show the gospel message. Another text is John 3:16 which so beautifully relates to the love of God, the coming of Jesus, his death, and man's salvation.

PREACHING AREA 2

LIVING IN HOLINESS

The term holiness is only slightly different in meaning than the term sanctification. Sanctification could be defined "made holy" or "dedicated to be holy." The Greek word authority W. A. Vine defines sanctification as (a) separated to God, and (b) the resultant state of being so separated.¹⁴ Holiness on the other hand "denotes the manifestation of the quality of holiness in personal conduct."¹⁵ Holiness, therefore, refers to a quality of life rather than a state of life.

The person who believes in God is given a righteousness from God. The Christian has entered the state of sanctification. The person who is in the state of sanctification will begin to bear the fruit of holiness in life. The Christian, therefore, would immediately begin to live a life pleasing to God. The more knowledge the Christian has of God's will, the more God like his or her life will be. This preaching area should challenge the Christian to forsake sin, to leave everything which does not draw the individual closer to God and to seek after everything which will draw the individual closer to God. The ultimate goal

of sanctification is the individual's complete commitment to God, commitment which will produce holiness in life.

Texts for this preaching area are many. The text I will later develop into a sermon is I Peter 1:13-2:5. Other possible texts are Romans 12:1-2, Galatians 5:13-26, Ephesians 2:1-10, Ephesians 6:10-18, and Colossians 3:1-7. These are just a few of the Scriptures which could be used to preach holiness.

PREACHING AREA 3

THE BAPTISM OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

The Holy Spirit proclaims the message of the Gospel to the world of man. It was the Holy Spirit who inspired King David to speak of Christ.¹⁶ Elizabeth, inspired by the Holy Spirit, praised Mary and greeted her saying, "Why am I so favored, that the mother of the Lord should come to me?"¹⁷ Zechariah and Simeon rejoiced in Jesus and, inspired by the Holy Spirit, spoke of him as God's salvation for the world.¹⁸ The Bible indicates that no man can recognize the salvation God offers in Jesus except his mind hear the words of the witness empowered by the Holy Spirit.

Jesus spoke of the good gift which the Heavenly Father would give. Jesus identified that gift to be the Holy Spirit.¹⁹ The Holy Spirit would empower the believers to be witnesses.²⁰ The Holy Spirit would be like a spring of living water within the believers.²¹ The Holy Spirit would be a comforter who would take the place of Jesus.²² During the last appearance of Jesus, he told the believers to wait in the city until "you have been clothed with power from on high."²³

The baptism of the Holy Spirit is to be sought by those who

believe in Jesus. All four Gospels tell us that John the Baptist taught of the Messiah saying, "When the Messiah comes he will baptize with the Holy Spirit."²⁴ The book of Acts contrasts the baptism of John and the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Acts shows Jesus eating with the believers and giving them these words of instruction, "Wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit."²⁵

The baptism of the Holy Spirit affects the life of the believer in three ways. First, the Holy Spirit gives knowledge. Jesus said that the Holy Spirit would "teach you all things and remind you of everything I have said to you."²⁶ Second, the Holy Spirit produces quality fruit in the life of the believer. Third, the Holy Spirit gives gifts of service to the believer.

Sermon topics in this area could be of great variety. The sermon I will develop will be a topical sermon. Its goal will be to introduce the baptism of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer. Other sermon ideas are to preach on the Holy Spirit as the revealer of Jesus, or the teacher of the truth. A sermon on the Holy Spirit, the producer of the quality life, would be good. The church could be inspired by a sermon showing the Holy Spirit as the equipper of the Christian servant.

PREACHING AREA 4

LIVING AS GOD'S WITNESS

The Gospel of Jesus Christ must be proclaimed. John the Baptist was sent as a forerunner of Jesus. His task was telling the people that the kingdom of heaven was at hand. He was to call the people to lives of

righteousness. He was to proclaim that God's time of salvation was very near. The first disciples of Jesus were originally disciples of John. John, after seeing a dove from heaven light upon Jesus, knew that Jesus was the Son of God. John then pointed to Jesus and said to two of his disciples, "Look, the Lamb of God."²⁷ Those two disciples then became disciples of Jesus.

Jesus saw his primary task to be the proclamation of the kingdom of God.²⁸ When Jesus called the fishermen, Peter, Andrew, James, and John, he called them to follow him and become fishers of men.²⁹ He trained the disciples to go out in groups of two proclaiming the kingdom of God. Jesus, just before the ascension, commissioned the believers to be witnesses unto the whole world.³⁰

The goal of this preaching area is to challenge Christians to share the Gospel. The text I will develop into a sermon is Luke 24:36-48. In this text Jesus reaffirms his purpose in coming to earth, then commissions the believers to witness to the world. Another might be the call of the four disciples to be fishers of men found in Matthew 4:19. Another sermon might be on the book of Luke. Luke was written to present a clear, orderly account of what God did for the world in Jesus.

FOOTNOTES

¹Jess Stein and Lawrence Urdang, ed., The Random House Dictionary of the English Language (New York: Random House, 1960), p. 444.

²Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, ed., Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Vol. V, Geoffrey W. Bromily, trans. and ed. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1967), p. 559.

³Ibid., p. 562.

⁴Ibid., p. 564.

⁵Op. cit. Stein, p. 1222.

⁶David Alexander and Pat Alexander, ed., Eerdmans Handbook to the Bible (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1973), p. 494.

⁷Matthew 23:25.

⁸Romans 3:28.

⁹

¹⁰Joseph J. Edwards, A Call to Christian Character, Bruce Shelley, ed. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1970), p. 47.

¹¹Romans 6:14.

¹²Romans 7:7

¹³Berman, Harold "The Moral Crisis of the Western Legal Traditions and the Weightier Matter of the Law," Criterion Vol. 19, Spring 1980, pp. 15-23.

¹⁴W. A. Vine, Vine's Expository Dictionary of the New Testament Words (McLean, Virginia: MacDonald Publishing Company, n/d), pp. 317-318.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 225.

¹⁶Mark 12:36, Acts 1:16.

¹⁷Luke 1:41.

¹⁸Luke 1:67, 2:25-26.

¹⁹Luke 11:13.

²⁰Acts 1:8.

²¹John 7:39.

²²John 14:26.

²³Luke 24:49.

²⁴Matthew 3:11, Mark 1:8, Luke 3:16, John 1:33.

²⁵Acts 1:4-5.

²⁶John 14:26.

²⁷John 1:35.

²⁸Mark 1:38.

²⁹Matthew 4:19.

³⁰Luke 24:47-48.

Chapter 5

OVERVIEW OF CHRISTIAN GROWTH

How does a person grow closer to God? Most religions of the world teach that the individual gains the favor of God, either by much service, or by total self denial. Christianity teaches that neither of these will draw the individual closer to God. Christianity teaches that the individual cannot approach God, except by God's mercy. The message that Christianity proclaims is that God sent the Holy Spirit to draw the individual to him. John Wesley said, "All outward means whatever, if separated from the Spirit of God, cannot profit at all."¹ C. S. Lewis writes, "after the first steps in the Christian life we realize that everything which really needs to be done in our world, can be done only by God."²

This is the great truth of God's grace. God is drawing man into faith and fellowship. John Wesley realized this truth and developed two rules for living his life of faith.³ The first rule was to refuse to depend upon his own works, the second, was to attend to the means of grace. The means of grace provide the subject material for the sermons in this unit. Although no one can earn entrance to heaven, the believer can participate in the activities which have become known as means of grace. John Wesley said "in the Apostolical church . . . the whole body of believers agreed, that Christ had ordained certain outward means, for conveying his grace into the souls of men."⁴ These outward means are the

means of grace.

The preaching areas suggested in this chapter will present four means of grace. The first preaching area will deal with communion or the remembrance of the Lord's supper. The second preaching area will deal with prayer. The third preaching area will deal with Bible study. The fourth preaching area will deal with Christian fellowship.

PREACHING AREA 1

GROWTH THROUGH COMMUNION

The Lord's supper was established by our Lord in the context of the Passover celebration. The Passover symbolized God's power to deliver from evil. The first Passover saw the Hebrews delivered from Egypt. The term Passover refers to the way God's death angel passed over those who believed God would do what he said and therefore, followed God's instructions.⁵ The Hebrews were spared when the angel saw the blood of the sacrificial lamb sprinkled on the door post. In this way the Hebrews were spared from death that night.

Passover also came to be associated with redemption.⁶ God required the first born both human and animal to be sacrificed. The first born of the flocks could be either redeemed by the sacrifice of some other animal to take its place. The human first born was to be redeemed.

By the time of Christ the feast of unleavened bread had also been merged into the Passover celebration.⁷ It symbolized the beginning of the new year. The old year with all its impurities were put away. A new year was begun.

So when Jesus instituted the Lord's supper, the Apostles under-

stood Jesus to be talking about God purifying work in redemption, and deliverance. Jesus himself was to be the sacrificial lamb. The life of the sinner could be redeemed through the death of Christ. The participation of the believers in the Lord's supper was to remind them of what Christ had done for them. The Apostle Paul stressed the idea of participation in the death of Christ. Paul shows that the person who believes in Christ dies with Christ to sins and is resurrected with Christ to new life.⁸

The communion service today is a reminder of what Christ has done and what Christ desires to do for the believer. The times of quietness, meditation, and prayer associated with communion are rich times for spiritual growth.

Sermons in this area can be taken from the original Passover in Exodus 12. The text in Exodus 13 where the consecration of the first born is established is a good text. The establishment of the Lord's supper in I Corinthians chapter 10 and 11 are possible texts as well.

PREACHING AREA 2

GROWTH THROUGH BIBLE STUDY

The Bible is God's word. The Bible claims to be the word of God is supported by internal evidence. The Bible makes the claim that it is the Word of God. Paul in II Timothy 3:16, "All Scripture is God breathed. . ." and Peter in II Peter 1:21, "For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit." History also supports the claims that the Bible is the Word of God. Frederick Owens, an archaeologist has indicated that archaeological discoveries has supported Scriptures. The way that the

Bible speaks to man is a third support of its claim to be the Word of God.

Since the Bible is God's word and since it speaks to the heart of its readers, it draws men to God. The Bible teaches the truth of God through the lives of people. It shows God calling men and women to his service. It shows God rebuking individuals for their sins. It shows God's grace extended through Jesus.

The sermons in this unit should challenge the Christian to seek personal growth through the personal study of the Bible. II Timothy 3:16 is a good text for this sermon. Psalms 19:7 is another possible text. A third possible text is Hebrews 4:12.

PREACHING AREA 3

GROWTH THROUGH PRAYER

O. Hallesby wrote a book on prayer which has become a classic. He said, "to pray is to let Jesus come into our hearts."¹⁰ In another place he said, "Prayer is the breath of the soul, the organ by which we receive Christ into our parched and withered hearts."¹¹ Prayer is a fresh fellowship with our Lord and Savior through which the soul grows closer to God.

Luke stresses the importance of prayer, both in the Gospel of Luke and in the Acts of the Apostles. In Luke, Jesus is shown to pray all night before he chose the Apostles.¹² Jesus drove the merchants from the temple saying, "It is written, My house will be a house of prayer, but you have made it a den of robbers."¹³ Jesus taught the disciples that prayer was a tool which could be used to prepare for temptation. He directed them to pray persistently.

In the book of Acts the disciples are seen time after time in prayer. They prayed in worship, and in times of trial. They prayed in private and in public. They prayed expecting answers and they received answers. The early fellowship was marked by devotion to "the Apostle's teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer."¹⁶ The apostles felt compelled to spend their time "in prayer and the ministry of the world."¹⁷ The laity also was involved in prayer.

God honors the prayers of the people. The godly but childless couple Zechariah and Elizabeth prayed for a child. They were chosen to be the parents of John the Baptist. God recognized the prayers and gifts to the poor by Cornelius and sent an angel to tell Cornelius to send for Peter. To Peter, God sent a vision so that when the messengers from Cornelius came, Peter gladly returned with them to the house of Cornelius. There Peter preached Jesus. Those present believed and were baptized both with water and by the Holy Spirit. While the local church prayed, the angel led Peter out of jail. With fasting and prayer, the local church at Antioch sent Paul and Barnabus out on the first missionary journey. Prayer was an essential part of the life of the early believers.

The spiritual leaders of both the Old and New Testaments spent much time in prayer. Moses was dependent upon prayer. Daniel was dependent upon prayer. Paul was dependent upon prayer. The Christian today is dependent upon prayer. E. M. Bounds was noted for his life of prayer and writings on prayer. He wrote,

Nothing distinguishes the children of God so clearly and strongly as prayer. . . . Christian people are prayerful; the worldly-minded, prayerless. Christians call on God; worldlings ignore God, and call not on His name. But even the Christian has need to cultivate continual prayer. . . . It is the expression of a relation to God, a yearning for divine communion. It is the outward and upward flow of the inward life toward its original fountain. It is an assertion of the soul's paternity, a claiming of the sonship which links man to the Eternal.¹⁸

When thinking of texts for a sermon on prayer, one immediately thinks of the Lord teaching the disciples to pray. This occasion is recorded in Matthew 6:5-14 and is an excellent text. Another text is James 4:2, "You do not have, because you do not ask God." This was one of R. A. Torrey's texts on prayer. Another of his texts was James 5:16, "The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective." So many excellent texts on prayer are possible that one is forced to wonder why prayer is not preached more and why so many believers today spend too little time in prayer.

PREACHING AREA 4

GROWTH THROUGH FELLOWSHIP

An interesting Bible study is the concept of the believer's ministry to other believers. One way this study could be undertaken is to look up the word "another" in a good concordance and look for verses which use the phrase "one to another." Here are a few concepts quickly gathered from this study; love one another;²¹ care for one another;²² by love serve one another;²³ forgive one another;²⁴ comfort one another;²⁵ and edify one another.²⁶

The local church is the local representative of God's family. We are not to try to live without the fellowship of the local church. The believer can be challenged, encouraged, and strengthened through fellowship.

William Barclay gives seven marks of fellowship which he draws from Romans 15:6.²⁷ This is his list,

1. Christian fellowship should be marked by the consideration of its members for each other.

2. Christian fellowship should be marked by the study of scripture; and from that study of scripture the Christian draws encouragement.
3. Christian fellowship should be marked with fortitude.
4. Christian fellowship should be marked by hope. The Christian hope is the hope which has seen everything and endured everything, and still has not despaired, because it believes in God.
5. Christian fellowship should be marked by harmony. (Those who are within Christian fellowship. . . will be quite sure that the Christ who unites them is greater by far than the differences which may divide them.)
6. Christian fellowship should be marked by praise. The Christian should enjoy life because he enjoys God.
7. Christian fellowship takes its pattern and its example, its inspiration and dynamic, from Jesus Christ.

One could use Romans 15:1-6 as a text upon Christian fellowship. Acts 2:42 would be another good text. I John 3:11-24 presents the love of Christ which should be seen in the fellowship of the church.

FOOTNOTES

¹John Wesley, Wesley's Doctrinal Standards, Part I, The Sermons, N. Burwach, ed. (Salem, Ohio: Schmul Publishers, 1881), p. 152.

²C. S. Lewis, Beyond Personality (New York: MacMillian Company, 1952), p. 165.

³Op. cit. Wesley, p. 2.

⁴Ibid., p. 150.

⁵see Exodus 12.

⁶see Exodus 13.

⁷Xavier Leon-DuFour, ed., Dictionary of Biblical Theology (New York: The Seabury Press, 1967), p. 407.

⁸Romans 6:1-14.

⁹Frank Charles Thompson, The New Chain Reference Bible (Indianapolis, Indiana: B. B. Kirkbridge Bible Co. Inc., 1964), p. 310 in Helps section.

¹⁰O. Hallesby, Prayer, Clarence Carlsen, trans. (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Augsburg Publishing House, 1975), p. 11.

¹¹Ibid., p. 12.

¹²Luke 6:12.

¹³Luke 19:46.

¹⁴Luke 18:1-8.

¹⁵Luke 22:46.

¹⁶Acts 2:42.

¹⁷Acts 6:4.

¹⁸E. M. Bounds, A Treasury of Prayer, ed. Leonard Ravenhill (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Bethany Fellowship, Inc., 1961), p. 137.

¹⁹John 13:34.

²⁰Romans 12:5.

²¹Romans 15:7.

²²I Corinthians 12:25.

²³Galatians 5:13.

²⁴Ephesians 4:32.

²⁵I. Thessolonians 4:18.

²⁶I Thessolonians 5:11.

²⁷William Barclay, The Letter to the Romans, (Edinburgh: The Saint Andrew Press, 1962), p. 215.

Chapter 6

Text: Romans 1:16-17.

Goal: To explain regeneration.

The Scriptures present a picture of God's expectations of men and women. God expected mankind to be righteous, God expected mankind to do that which was right. The stories of Noah, Abraham, Job, and John the Baptist fill us with a sense of awe as they open our eyes to see these men as God saw them. Here were men living and serving God in righteousness. Each man maintained his faith and brought glory to God.

John the Baptist proclaimed the necessity of righteousness in life when he preached the baptism of repentance. He expected those he baptized to live a new life. "Prepare the way of the Lord", he shouted, "make straight paths for him...straighten your lives and see God's salvation" (Luke 3:4ff). John the Baptist warned the people against doing evil, and exhorted them to do good.

The short accounts of John's ministry found in Luke 3 and Matthew 3 reveal three truths. First, they show that the godly life involves a turning from evil. Second, they show that the godly life involves the doing of good. Third, they show that the righteousness of the godly life is not the righteousness of obeying the law only. God's righteousness goes beyond obeying the law.

The Pharisees were the legalists of Jesus' day.¹ They took great pride in knowing and obeying the law. The Pharisees "separated

themselves from any type of Levitical impurity and dedicated themselves to following the Mosaic law."² The name Pharisees means separated by special works.³ Although some devout and godly men were Pharisees, the group was criticized by both Jesus and John the Baptist.

When the Pharisees came to hear John preach, he greeted them with harsh words. "You brood of snakes," he called them. Then he exhorted them "to produce fruit in keeping with righteousness" (Matthew 3:7-8). This could be restated, "Repent and allow the work of God to produce good works in your life." John expected those who followed him to enter a righteous life.

The life that Jesus lived fit this description, for the gospel shows that Jesus lived a righteous life. The Scriptures describe the growing years of Jesus as a time in which Jesus "grew in wisdom, and stature, and in favor with God and men" (Luke 3:52). When Jesus was baptized he said, "It is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15). The Greek word for righteousness used here is dikaiousune. It refers to an act which fulfills the law. Jesus was concerned with keeping the law. He declared that he came to fulfill the law and the prophets. The transfiguration of Jesus supported the emphasis Jesus placed upon the law and the prophets. The two who walked and talked with Jesus at the transfiguration were Moses, the law giver, and Elijah, the prophet.

Jesus concluded the Sermon on the Mount with a story of a wise man, and a foolish man.⁴ The wise man is the man who hears the words of Jesus and applies them to his life. The wise man built his house upon the rock. The rain came, the rivers rose, and the winds blew and beat upon that house, yet it did not fall, because its foundation was upon the rock. Those who hear the teachings of Jesus and do not live by them are

like the foolish man who built his house upon the sand. The rain came, the river rose, the winds blew and beat against that house and it is destroyed. The individual who uses the word of God as his basic philosophy of life will be able to stand firm in faith as life's storms and trouble assail him.

The teachings of Scripture shows that God expects men and women to be righteous. This is made clear in the teachings concerning heaven and judgment. In the parable of the sheep and goats,⁵ the righteous are rewarded because they saw what needed to be done to help others and did it. The unrighteous are condemned because they saw a need and did nothing about it.

But what of life realities? Have people lived by the Spirit of the law? How do people measure up? Romans 1:29 says, "they have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed, and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice." Romans 3:23 reads, "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God." The Scriptures show that not one individual has been righteous. The good news is that this point of condemnation is where the gospel of Christ begins. The good news concerning Jesus Christ, proclaims a righteousness which is by faith and which is offered to all.

A Christian is an individual who has received this righteousness by faith. The believer realizes that his righteousness is not that which comes by obeying the law. The Christian realizes that his righteousness is not a result of ones efforts to live a good life, nor is it due to being raised in a Christian home. The only source of this righteousness is the grace and love of God. "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son that whosoever believes in him shall not perish, but have eternal life."⁶

A rich young man came to Jesus seeking eternal life.⁷ "Teacher, what good thing must I do to get eternal life?" he asked. He desired to earn his way to heaven. He wanted to be known as one of the good people of God. Jesus replied, "There is only One who is good" (Mark 10:18). When we look at God's goodness, at God's holiness, then we realize the utterly hopeless state in which we live. God is pure and desires purity, but we have been corrupted and desire to follow the evil desires of our nature.

God saw the sin and guilt of the world and he sent his son to become man. Sin had entered the world by one man Adam, now God would use a man, his son Jesus, to conquer sin. Jesus never committed a sin, yet he knew the separation and anguish which sin causes, because he took our sins upon himself. Jesus could never have been cursed by the law. The law could not point at Jesus and accuse him saying, "You have sinned, you are cursed, you must die." But the Scripture tells us that Christ was cursed for us. Galatians 3:13 reads, "Christ redeemed from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: 'Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree'."

The law can justly accuse us. We have sinned. The law points at my sin and then turns its accusing finger at me and says, "You are a sinner, you deserve to die." I hear the words and must acknowledge, "Yes I have sinned, I do deserve to die." But I have been redeemed, I have been given a "righteousness from God."⁸ The law has been satisfied. God has shown his love. Because of that love our sins will not condemn us. We do not deserve that much love, we cannot earn that much love, but we can accept that love. "The gift of God is eternal life in Jesus Christ."⁹

In a hymn entitled "My Hope is in the Lord" Norman Clayton wrote, "My hope is in the Lord, who gave himself for me, and paid the price of all

my sin at Calvary. No merit of my own His anger to suppress, my only hope is found in Jesus, righteousness."¹⁰

This righteousness of God is mine through faith. Our text emphasizes this, saying, "a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last." Our salvation rests upon faith. But what is faith? The Greek has three words translated in the English word, faith.¹¹ One word, elpis (ἐλπίς), is used only once and exhorts us to remain "confident in faith." One word, oligopistos (ὀλιγόπιστος) is a compound word which means "little faith." It is used when Jesus stilled the storm after the disciples woke him because they feared they would drown. It was used of Peter when, after he began to walk on the water, he doubted and began to sink in the water. Peter showed little faith and began to sink. The third word is pistis (πίστις), used primarily in terms of "religious belief or doctrine." Christian faith, requires the individual to express confidence in Christ by faith.

Faith is rational because it is founded upon what Christ has done in history and what is revealed in the Bible. Faith is mystical because it is based on the inner knowledge of what God is doing in the heart to convict the individual of sin and to free from sin. Faith is practical because it determines the lifestyle of the Christian.

Hebrews 11:1 reads, "Faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see." This life of faith has become known as positional sanctification. Positional sanctification refers to being accepted by God because of our position in Christ by faith. The Bible says that it is not the lifestyle of the believer which saves (although the believer's lifestyle is certainly committed to God), but the position in Christ by faith.

The final portion of the text says, "The righteous shall live

by faith." These words are important words for all, but they are especially important to the Christian. The Bible has told us how God looks for righteousness in all. The gospel of Christ proclaims the righteousness from God which is offered to all through belief in Christ. These words of the text, "The righteous shall live by faith," stand as a guidepost pointing towards the road to eternal life. The road to which they point might be known as the highway of faith.

The Christian life is based on faith. It is a new and different life than what was lived by the non-Christian. The Christian life is not ruled by the masters of sin and law which rule over the non-Christian. The Christian not only has entered a relationship with Christ, but is cleansed by Christ. This cleansing is known as initial sanctification. Initial defined as "beginning" or "first"; sanctification here defined "made pure by God." The Christian's life is made new. The sin and guilt of the believer's life is washed by the blood of Christ.

The New International Version gives Galatians 5:1-12 the paragraph title, "Freedom in Christ." The first verse of the passage reads, "It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery." This freedom frees the Christian from two types of slavery. First, the Christian is no longer a slave to sin. Second, the Christian is not to be a slave to the law.

We are no longer slaves to sin, because our faith in Christ allows Christ to change our lives and purge them from sin. Our sinful natures causes us to seek to make each of us the center of the world. We consider ourselves to be Gods. The basic needs of the body becomes the desires of our hearts. But as we allow Christ to purge our life, then Christ becomes our God and his will becomes the desire of our hearts.

This is not something we do ourselves, we merely hear Christ knocking at our souls, and open the door to him and he cleanses our lives of sin. This cleansing as we noticed earlier is known as initial sanctification. Once cleansed the Christian wishes to make righteousness the rule of their lives. Should we fail, then we can remember the words of John as noted in I John 2:1, "My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense - Jesus Christ, the Righteous One." This is possible because of positional sanctification. Our faith has placed us in fellowship with Christ. Should we sin and recognizing our sin, repent of it, then Christ is faithful to forgive us. This is like the mother who is encouraging her infant to learn to walk. She is in front of the child, encouraging the child to take steps towards her in faith, anxious for the child to succeed. Should the child fail and fall, the mother is ready to pick the child up to begin again. So by faith in Christ, we are no longer enslaved to sin. We have been freed, so that we can follow the guidings of the Holy Spirit. The only thing which can separate us from the love of Christ is our refusal to repent when we sin and our refusal to begin again in faith.

The Christian is also freed from slavery to the law. The laws' purpose is not to provide salvation, but rather to reveal the need for salvation. The law points out sin. Romans 3:20 reads, "Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather through the law we become conscious of sin." Salvation comes by grace through faith. "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith - and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God."¹² The purpose of the law is to condemn sin. The Christian is freed from slavery to law. The Christian's sins have been forgiven. The believer is seen to be

righteous in Christ.

The Christian life begins by faith in Christ. The Christian life is maintained in faith in Christ. The Christian life ends with faith in Christ. When John saw the Glorified Christ, Jesus identified himself saying, "I am the Alpha and the Omega, who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty."¹³ It could be said that faith in Christ is the A to Z of the Christian life.

Because faith is so important in the Christian life, the devil attacks it fiercely. Paul constantly had to guard against people who were teaching that the law must be obeyed. Paul, who could have been selected the one most likely to earn the favor of God wrote, "We who are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners know that a man is not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ."¹⁴ The Jerusalem conference, which is the first council recorded in Scripture, was called to decide what rules the Gentiles would be required to obey. The conclusion reached at that conference was that God had called the Gentiles to the life of faith and accepted them by giving them salvation and filling them with the Holy Spirit, so the church should also accept the Gentiles as brothers and sisters by faith. The Galatians church was troubled by people who came teaching them to value the law and obey it. Paul wrote to the church warning them to beware of these teachers who were trying to "pervert the gospel of Christ."¹⁵ Paul asked the Galatians, "Did you receive the Spirit by observing the law, or by believing what you heard? Are you so foolish? After beginning with the Spirit, are you now trying to attain your goal by human efforts?"¹⁶

Today there are many groups which teach that one can and must earn salvation. So let us remember the words of Romans 1:17, "For in the Gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by

faith from first to last, just as it is written. "The just shall live by faith." A third aspect of sanctification is to be found in these words, "The just shall live by faith." Progressive sanctification is sanctification in process. In the life of faith the individual learns more and more of the nature of God, and the miracle of his grace. This new light or new understanding allows the Christian to forsake the old lifestyle and come closer to God. This action is progressive sanctification.

The Christian life is a vital personal relationship where God's word is written by the Spirit on the mind and heart of the believer. The law stands in its pronouncement of sin. The Christian individual should recognize that breaking the law indicates a departure from the guidings of the Spirit. No man will be saved by obedience to the law, but the law still stands because it points out the need for redemption. The law, though, is a minimum standard. We need to look beyond obedience to the law, towards freedom of service in faith.

I exhort you to remember the joy you found by faith in Christ, and remembering that joy, stand firm today. Christian, expect the future to be continually enriched as you follow the Spirit's guidings. Christian, get excited because the God who changed your life will now open doors of truth, love, and service through which you can bring glory to his name.

FOOTNOTES

¹Smith's Bible Dictionary (Philadelphia: A. J. Holman Company, n/d), pp. 243-244.

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

⁴Matthew 7:24-27.

⁵Matthew 25:31-46.

⁶John 3:16.

⁷Matthew 19:16-30.

⁸Romans 3:21.

⁹Romans 6:23.

¹⁰Hymns of the Living Faith (Winona Lake, Indiana: Light and Life Press, 1951), p. 437.

¹¹James Strong, The Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible (Iowa Falls, Iowa: Riverside Book and Bible House, n/d), pp. 330-331.

¹²Ephesians 2:8.

¹³Revelation 1:8.

¹⁴Galatians 2:15-16.

¹⁵Galatians 1:7.

¹⁶Galatians 3:2-3.

Chapter 7

LIVING IN HOLINESS

Text: I Peter 1:13-2:3.

Goal: To show that Peter is referring to entire sanctification when he says, "grow up in your salvation" and to explain what the text reveals entire sanctification to be.

Simon Peter could usually be found right in the middle of everything. From the time when Andrew had brought Peter to Jesus, Peter had taken a position of leadership, when Jesus asked the apostles, "who do you say that I am?" (Luke 9:20). Peter had answered, "The Christ of God" (Luke 9:18). Peter, with James, and John, composed an inner circle of those especially close to Jesus.

Peter continued as unofficial leader after the death and resurrection of Jesus. On the day of Pentecost, Peter was the first to proclaim salvation through Jesus. He was the first to perform a miracle of healing in the name of Jesus. Peter was the first to declare salvation by faith to the Gentiles.

Peter was always at the forefront, always ready to lead except for one time. That night when Jesus stood on trial before the high priest, the courage of Peter had failed. Only a few hours earlier, Peter had heard Jesus state the impossible. Jesus had said that he, Peter, would deny him. Peter deny his Lord, how absurd, Peter would rather die than to deny Jesus. Yet now as the rooster crowed to welcome the new day, Peter realized that

he had indeed denied Jesus and he went out and wept in repentance and shame.

In his sorrow Peter remembered what else Jesus had said the night before. Jesus had said, "Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers."¹ The word translated strengthen is the Greek word sterizo (στηρίζω). It means to strengthen, to establish, to confirm.² Jesus had directed that Peter should act as pastor to the believers. Peter would confirm the truth that Jesus was indeed the Messiah. Peter would encourage the faith of the brethren and help them to live their lives by faith.

Peter wrote two letters which are part of the New Testament. If we were to guess, we might guess that Peter wrote these letters in order to insure the faith of its readers, we would be right. The great Bible teacher and preacher G. Campbell Morgan wrote, "The purpose of Peter in writing...was to do the very thing that his Lord had told him - to establish them and strengthen them."³ So it is in the letters of I and II Peter, we see pastor Peter writing to believers throughout the world.

The life of which Peter writes is the life triumphant in Christ. Other titles have been given to this life. It has been called Christian perfection, perfect life, and entire sanctification. Entire sanctification is one aspect of sanctification.

The great Wesleyan Bible commentator, Adam Clark gives two basic meanings for the term sanctification.⁴ First, sanctification refers to "presenting to God." This use of sanctification refers to the work of the believer as he presents land for a church, or an offering to the work of God. This can be seen in the purchase and use of a

communion set. The set is dedicated to God in the participation of the Lord's supper, that is the taking of bread and wine in remembrance that Christ gave his body for us and that his blood was the sacrificial blood of the new covenant shed "for the forgiveness of sins."⁵ The communion set is used only for this purpose. No one would think to use the bread plates of the communion set for serving cookies on fellowship night, because they have been dedicated for a special use in worship.

A second meaning of sanctification is "to make pure." This can only be the work of God. In the book of Isaiah, the prophet tells of a vision he had which reveals how God makes man pure.⁶ In the vision the prophet saw the Lord and his holiness and realized how unholy he himself was in contrast. In response to his lament of unworthiness God sent a heavenly being with a live coal from the altar to touch the prophet. Then God said, "Your guilt is taken from you, and your sin atoned for."⁷ God loves every man and woman. God will sanctify those who will allow God to work in their lives.

The concept of the sanctified life is confusing because the word sanctified refers to four different aspects of the Christian's relationship to God. The first aspect is known as positional sanctification. George Turner, writer of a classic on holiness, says that positional sanctification refers to "the ascription of sanctity to persons (or things) by virtue of a relationship to Deity."⁸ I Corinthians 1:30 reads, "You are in Christ Jesus who has become...our righteousness, holiness, and redemption."

The second aspect of sanctification is initial sanctification. Dr. Turner says that initial sanctification is a "change of status." I Corinthians 6:10 speaks of the types of people who will not get to heaven, but verse 11 speaks of the change which belief in Christ makes.

Verse 11 reads, "And that (sinful) is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of God." The blood of Jesus washes those who trust in Jesus, removing the guilt of sins.

The third aspect of sanctification is called progressive sanctification. Dr. Turner wrote, "The Christian's obligation is to cooperate with the Spirit of God in making the initial reception of sanctification all pervasive in every area of life."⁹ In progressive sanctification, the Christian becomes a partner with the Holy Spirit in making every day life that which is pleasing to God. Romans 6:22 says that the benefits the Christian gathers from the new life in Christ "leads to holiness."

The fourth aspect of sanctification is called entire sanctification. The first three aspects of sanctification spoke of the results of faith on the part of the individual and the purifying power on the part of God. Entire sanctification speaks of the results of each, bearing fruit in the life of the Christian.

The Christian's part is to have faith in God. Faith brings forth, the fruit of total commitment on the part of the individual. Paul called for the Christian to make this commitment in Romans 12:1 saying, "I urge you. . . to offer your bodies a living sacrifice." This commitment of the believer has two directions. The first calls for the removal of those things in life which are unfit for God; the second is to put on those things in life which are fit for God.

In Colossians Paul wrote,

Set your hearts on things above, . . . put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, . . . as God's chosen people, . . . clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, gentleness, and patience. . .

And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.¹⁰

The purifying power of God also has two directions. The first makes a person fit by cleansing of sins through the blood of Christ. The second direction is the guidance of the Holy Spirit through which the truth of God can be learned and incorporated into the person's life.

Now having defined sanctification, let's look at I Peter 1:13-2:8 to see what Peter says about holiness. Peter says holiness is founded upon the superior sacrifice, seen by the superior hope, and lived in the superior life.

When talking about the superior sacrifice, Peter begins with a backward glance of the empty way of life handed down to his readers by their forefathers. Peter was writing to Christians in areas which were basically Greek descendants, although we know that some Hebrew people lived in the areas also. So Peter was writing both to Greek and Hebrew people. The empty ways of the forefathers would first of all refer to the ideas which men have always had, namely that anything good could be achieved if one were rich enough in material things. Peter simply ranks silver and gold, which are the most trustworthy earthly wealth, among all perishable things. Material things are not sufficient to bring a person to God.

The Greeks would have thought of the religious ideas with which they had been raised. The Greek gods were many and varied. The main difference between a Greek god and man was that the Greek god was immortal and man was not. The hope of eternal life or even of a change life was not possible through faith in the gods of whom the Greeks had been taught. These gods could punish but they could not provide a re-birth of the spirit of man.

The Hebrews, on the other hand, had been taught some things about the true God. Yet so much of what they were taught was not faith in God but rather human effort. The law which was given to make individuals realize how much they needed to trust in God had been turned into a system of self righteousness. People do not have the ability to become fit for God.

Christ became the superior sacrifice through which people can come to God. It is through Jesus that we believe God. It is through our faith in Jesus that we are counted as righteous. Remember the term "positional sanctification"? We are counted as fit to approach God, because of our relationship with Jesus in faith. But the superior sacrifice does not stop there. Peter says, "You were redeemed...with the precious blood of Christ." The Greek word here translated redeemed means "brought out of." If I redeemed a watch I had pawned, I went and paid a price for the watch after which I could take the watch out of the pawn shop, for it was completely mine. The people Peter was writing to were familiar with slavery. A person could be made a slave if he/she could not repay a debt. The person who was made a slave because of debts could be redeemed from slavery by having someone pay off the debt for them. This is the picture Peter draws for us. The Christian is redeemed by the blood of Christ from the empty life so that the believer might live for God. This is initial sanctification. The freeing from the old sinful life so that life can begin anew in Christ.

The superior sacrifice of Jesus identifies us with Jesus and gives us through Jesus a new beginning in life. John Fletcher points out that the two sided beginning of salvation and sanctification calls for both action by God and action by man. He said that both those who say, "free Grace is all that is needed," and those who say, "Obedience

is all that is needed," are wrong.¹² Fletcher said the way to the life God wants his people to live is "by due combination of prevenient, assisting free grace; and by submissive, assisted free will."¹³ God has made our salvation possible in Jesus. We can receive that salvation by faith.

Peter also speaks of the superior hope of the Christian. This superior hope of the Christian is a confidence, or trust which is grounded upon God's grace. God's grace is seen to take effect in the life of the individual when that person believes in Jesus. The act of faith is only the beginning of God's grace. God desires faith not to be a static intellectual belief nor an unstable emotional feeling. God desires faith to be a directing force in life. Our text says, "Prepare your minds. . . be self-controlled;. . . be Holy. . ."

The superior hope calls for the Christians themselves to prepare so that God can do great things in their lives. The Christians prepare themselves mentally by searching the Scriptures in search of more knowledge of God. They prepare physically through self-control, avoiding the areas of life which lead to sin, while seeking out those areas of life such as Bible study, Christian fellowship, prayer, and worship, which draws them closer to God.

Through the superior hope the Christian can catch a vision of the holy life. Once envisioned, the Christian will be challenged to begin to live that life. Adam Clark wrote these words which should encourage the Christian in this attempt. He said, "God never gives a precept but He offers sufficient grace to enable you to perform it. Believe as He would have you, and act as he strengthens you and you will believe all things savingly, and do all things well."¹⁴ This growth into the holy life is known as progressive sanctification.

Peter also tells us that the life of holiness produces the superior life. This life is founded in God's word. II Timothy 3:16-17 reads, "All scripture is God--breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work." The Bible shows two directions which are possible for life. One direction recognizes God as creator and Lord and enters a personal relationship to him. Kindness, gentleness, and love are a few of the characteristics that help to develop this relationship with God.¹⁵ The second direction destroys the superior life and the possible relationship people could have with God. Sexual immorality, greed, anger, and bitterness are a few of the characteristics which harm the relationship to God. Through the Bible, the Christian is able to gain an understanding of life which is greater than can be gained through an individual's own experience.

An understanding of the superior life can be gained from the Bible, but the superior life must be lived by obedience. Portions of our text read, "As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance," and "you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth." A mighty change takes place in the life of the Christian. The Christian's life has been changed first by believing that God has acted to forgive sins and to give new life. Then secondly, by the Christian putting the new life to work in life. As the text says, the Christian has been "born again, . . . through the living and enduring word of God."

The call here is to entire sanctification. Complete living commitment to God is sought. Romans 12:1 calls for the Christians to become "a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God." Our text reads, "But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do."

John Fletcher called the holy life "Christian perfection" and said of it,

Christian perfection is a spiritual constellation made up of the gracious starts-perfect repentance, perfect faith, perfect humility, perfect meekness, perfect self-denial, perfect resignation, perfect hope, perfect charity for our visible enemies, as well as for our earthly relations; and above all perfect love for our invisible God, through the explicit knowledge of our Mediator Jesus Christ.¹⁷

The superior life is revealed in the Bible,¹⁸ it enters the Christian's life by obedience,¹⁹ the fruit it bears in the Christian life is love. John Wesley said Christian perfection

. . . is nothing higher and nothing lower than this: the pure love of God and man; the loving God with all our heart and soul and our neighbor as ourselves; it is love governing the heart and life, running through all our tempers, words, and actions.²⁰

Paul in writing to the Colossians said that love binds all virtues together in perfect harmony.²¹ Peter in our text exhorts Christians to "love one another deeply, with all your hearts."

Charles Wesley was the foremost hymn writer of the Wesleyan revival. The words of one of his hymns express the concept of entire sanctification very well.

Jesus, thy all victorious love
Shed in my heart abroad;
Then shall my feet no longer move,
Rooted and fixed in God.

O that in me the sacred fire
Might now begin to glow;
Burn up the fross of base desire,
And make the mountains flow!

O that it now from heaven might fall,
And all my sins cousume!
Come Holy Ghost, for Thee I call;
Spirit of burning, come!

Refining fire, go through my heart;
Illuminate my soul;
Scatter Thy life through every part,
And sanctify the whole.²²

By looking at our text, the entire view of sanctification can

be seen. Positional sanctification involves a change in association with Christ. Initial sanctification involves a change in status. We are cleansed by the blood of Christ and are made pure. Progressive sanctification involves a change in life, where the Christian adapts his or her life in response to the Spirit of God. Entire sanctification is a change in commitment. The Christian makes a total commitment to live for God.

FOOTNOTES

¹Luke 22:31-32.

²William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1957), p. 775.

³G. Cambell Morgan, The Unfolding Message of the Bible (U.S.A. Fleming H. Revell Company, 1961), p. 379.

⁴Adam Clark, Entire Sanctification (Salem, Ohio: Schmul Convention Book Store, n/d), p. 3.

⁵Matthew 26:28.

⁶Isaiah 6:1-8.

⁷Isaiah 6:7.

⁸George Turner, The Vision Which Transforms (Kansas City, Missouri: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1964), p. 120.

⁹Ibid. p. 121.

¹⁰Colossians 3:1-14.

¹¹I Peter 1:18-19.

¹²John Fletcher, Fletcher on Perfection (Salem, Ohio: Convention Book Store, n/d), p. 23.

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Clark, Op. cit., p. 14.

¹⁵Colossians 3:12.

¹⁶Colossians 3:5, 8.

¹⁷Fletcher, Op. cit., p. 2

¹⁸John 10:10.

¹⁹Romans 12:2.

²⁰John Wesley, Wesley's Doctrinal Standards, Part I, The Sermons, ed. n. Burwash (Salem, Ohio: Schmul Publishers, 1881), p. 19.

²¹Colossians 3:14.

²²Charles Wesley, "Jesus, Thy All Victorious Love," in Hymns of Faith and Life (Winona Lake, Indiana: Light and Life Press, 1976), p. 319.

Chapter 8

Text: I Thessalonians 1:2-5.

Goal: To encourage Christians to expect God to give them power for living through the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

This sermon deals with the baptism of the Holy Spirit. You may have already noticed that the text chosen for this sermon does not mention the baptism of the Holy Spirit. You may wonder how I can preach on the baptism of the Holy Spirit from a text which does not mention the term. Allow me to explain.

The term "baptism of the Holy Spirit" is used only six times throughout the Biblical material. John the Baptist said that the one who would come after him would be the Son of God. He would baptize, not with water, but with the Holy Spirit. All four gospels quote John's statement.¹ The accounts vary slightly. Two of them, Matthew and Luke, include the words "and fire." In the Gospel of John, John the Baptist identifies Jesus, the Son of God, to be the one who would baptize with the Holy Spirit.

The fifth use of the term "baptism of the Holy Spirit", attributed to Jesus, is found in Acts 1:5. Allow me to share Acts 1:4-5.

On one occasion, while he (Jesus) was eating with them, he gave them this command: "Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit."

These verses are important for several reasons. First, the words "while he was eating with them" gives an indication that the time of which he

spoke was the Passover meal. This meal Jesus shared with his apostles the night of his arrest. It was at this time that Jesus taught the disciples concerning the Holy Spirit.² Second, these verses are important because the words "the gift my Father promised" reminds one of the good gift the heavenly Father will give.³ Jesus had taught the disciples, "your Father in heaven (will) give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him."⁴ The concept here is that the gift will be given to those who ask. Third, Acts 1:4-5 are important because the words, "But in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit," connect the believers being filled with the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost and the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Neither the account of the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost nor the explanation which Peter gave in his sermon that day mentions "baptism of the Holy Spirit". The explanation Peter gave was twofold. First, in Acts 2:17 Peter said this was the fulfillment of prophecy which said God would pour out his Spirit on the people. Second, in Acts 2:38 this was identified as the gift of the Holy Spirit. The infilling of the Holy Spirit is in fulfillment of prophecy and God's promise of the good gift. Its association with the baptism of the Holy Spirit is inferred in the first two chapters of Acts rather than stated.

The final reference to the "baptism of the Holy Spirit" is found in Acts 11. In this Scripture Peter is explaining to the circumcised believers of Jerusalem what happened at the house of Cornelius. Verses 15 and 17 read,

As I began to speak, the Holy Spirit came on them as he had come on us in the beginning. Then I remembered what the Lord had said, "John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit." So if God gave them the same gift as he gave us, who believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I to think that I could oppose God!

These verses connect the "baptism of the Holy Spirit" with the filling

of the Holy Spirit. Furthermore, these verses connect the baptism of the Holy Spirit with the coming of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. Therefore, other similar infillings of the Spirit may be understood as occasions where those present are "baptized" by the Holy Spirit. These verses connect the baptism of the Holy Spirit and the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Now that we have looked at the term "baptism of the Holy Spirit" we know that the term was used to refer to the entrance of the Holy Spirit as the indwelling Spirit of God. This indwelling of God's Spirit is one characteristic of the new relation the individual may have with God. James Elder Cumming wrote a comprehensive study of the Holy Spirit entitled A Handbook on the Holy Spirit. He said that the two distinctives of the New Covenant were,

(1) It rests on the blood of Christ, and (2) it contains the promise of the indwelling Spirit to "write God's Law in our hearts." In other words, it is a Covenant whose two chief works are Calvary and Pentecost.⁵

The first of these distinctives, the blood of Christ, cleanses the life of the believer from sin. The second distinctive, the indwelling Spirit, empowers the life of the believer through the baptism of the Holy Spirit. The baptism of the Holy Spirit is manifested in power. The Apostles were to wait in Jerusalem until given power by the Holy Spirit. This power would enable them to serve God and witness for him more effectively. The evangelist R. A. Torrey said, "The baptism with the Holy Spirit is a work of the Holy Spirit always connected with and primarily for the purpose of testimony and service."⁶

In our text, Paul is commenting upon the life of the Thessalonian believers. Their lives bear the marks of believing the Gospel to the fullest. The power of the Holy Spirit could be seen in their lives. We will

examine the influence of the Holy Spirit as exhibited in the lives of the Thessalonian Christians. We will look at (1) the Gospel enthroned life, (2) the Gospel enriched life, and (3) the Gospel empowered life.

The Gospel enthroned life is that life of deep conviction in the saving and purifying power of God. The term "deep conviction" could have been translated "assurance", or a "firm persuasion".⁷ The Christian life is the life built on personal faith in Jesus Christ. This life of faith, empowered by the Holy Spirit, results in an assurance of forgiveness of sins as well as an assurance of adoption into the family of God.

Paul taught the concept of adoption in Galatians 4:4-6,

But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the Law, that we might receive the full rights of sons. Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out "Abba, Father."

Two steps are involved here. First, the believer is redeemed and made a son. Second, the Holy Spirit is sent to the believer with the joy of sonship. The Christian rejoices in his adoption into the family of God.

Jesus also taught that the believer would enter into the family of God as he said,

I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever--the Spirit of truth. . . . But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; . . . On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you.⁸

Jesus called the Holy Spirit the "Spirit of truth". The Holy Spirit is God's truth living within the heart of the believer. The Spirit of truth is associated with the life of obedience. Clearly the context of Jesus' teaching of adoption is filled with the need for obedience. "If you love me, you will obey what I command. . . . Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. . . . If anyone loves me, he will obey

my teaching."⁹ These verses come before, after, and in the middle of the teachings of Jesus concerning adoption. The knowledge which the Spirit gives involves a respect for the fairness of God. God desires individuals to do that which is right. God will reward (or condemn) the individual for the good, or lack of, good deeds seen in their lives.

I Thessalonians 1:3 mentions the "work produced by faith" as seen in the lives of the Thessalonian believers. This was faith putting truth to work in removing sinful deeds from the lives of those who believe. The Thessalonians lived lives made free by the Gospel. Indeed, they lived the Gospel enthroned life.

The Thessalonians also lived a Gospel empowered life. The presence of the Holy Spirit in the lives of the Thessalonian Christians is seen in their effort to build the church. Verse 3 contains the phrase, "labors prompted by love." The labor of which Paul speaks is that work which produces Christian lives.¹⁰ The word "labor" carries the concept of very hard work, the type of work which leaves an individual dead tired at the completion of the task.

I would suggest to you that this labor is a result of the gifts of the Spirit. I realize that the books of I and II Thessalonians do not provide us with a list of the gifts of the Spirit. I realize that there is only one gift of the Spirit mentioned in the books, yet still, I propose that Paul was referring to the gifts of the Spirit. The one gift of the Spirit mentioned in Thessalonians is prophecy. The gift of prophecy was definitely being used in Thessalonica. Paul's mention of the gift is the result of some of the Christians treatment of it with contempt. Therefore, Paul wrote warning the church to be careful of scoffing this gift. He writes, "Do not put out the Spirit's fire; do not treat prophecies with contempt. Test everything. Hold to the good."¹¹ Since the gift of

prophecy was in use, I believe it most likely that other accepted gifts were also used.

Another reason I believe the phrase "labor of love" referred to the gifts of the Spirit is Paul's teaching concerning the gifts of the Spirit in other portions of Scripture. Paul teaches that the gifts of the Spirit refers to ministries which the Spirit of God gives in order that the entire church might be healthy.¹² In Ephesians 4:11-13, Paul wrote,

It was he who gave some to be Apostles, some to be Prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

Paul showed the gifts to be special inspirations which equipped the believer for one or more ministries within the church.

Paul also shows a distinct relationship between the proper use of the gift of the Spirit and Christian love. Frank Stanger, longtime president of Asbury Theological Seminary, began a discussion on the gifts of the Spirit saying, "It is profitable to be reminded by the Apostle Paul that without genuine Christian love, all spiritual gifts are valueless."¹³ Paul's major teaching on the gifts may be found in I Corinthians chapters 12 and 14. These gifts chapters are separated by I Corinthians 13, which is the great love chapter of the Bible. Other sources of primary teachings concerning gifts are Romans 12 and Ephesians 4. Each of these references emphasizes Christian love.

Our text uses the words "labor of love." The gifts of the Spirit are labors of love. These demand hard tiring work as each member of the body does his part to build the body of Christ. These labors are inspired by the Spirit of God. These labors are completed in love and

through love.

Frank Stanger divides the list of gifts into three classifications.¹⁴ The "revelation" gifts, such as discernment of spirits, words of knowledge, and words of wisdom provide understanding of spiritual truths. The "worship" gifts of prophecy, tongues, and interpretation of tongues proclaim God's truth. The "power" gifts, include faith, miracles, and healings, enable the believer to do some special work which could be considered supernatural. These gifts are given by the Holy Spirit for the building of the church and the glorification of God. The gifts are labors of love. The gifts reflect the Gospel empowered life.

Our text also speaks of what I call "the Gospel enriched life." Verse three of the text has the words "endurance inspired by hope." The Greek word hupomone (ὑπομονή) translated "endurance" in our text is used in two ways. It is first used in Scripture in Luke 8:15. In this verse Jesus is completing his explanation of the parable of the sower. Jesus said, "the seed on the good soil stands for those with a noble and good heart, who hear the word, retain it, and by persevering produce a crop." The Greek word translated "endurance" in our text is here translated "persevering." The idea of suffering is present. The seed was exposed to the trials of the world and endured to produce fruit. The word is first defined "an enduring which produces fruit."

The second definition is revealed in the second Scriptural usage found in Luke 21:19. It reads, "By standing firm you will save yourselves." This Scripture carries a definite persecution theme. "The world," Jesus is saying, "will hate the believer." The Christian is persecuted but the believer is to stand firm in faith.

The Apostle Paul, in Romans 5:2-14, identifies these two meanings as a growth process which takes place in the heart of the Christian. Paul

wrote, "We rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope." Persecutions produce endurance, or an abiding in the Lord, which produces character. Christian character is seen in the fruits of the Spirit.

The Thessalonians had undergone great persecution. This clearly was held in Paul's mind as he wrote to them. I am sure, as Paul wrote of the fruits of the Spirit he included the abiding nature of hope in the midst of persecution.

Frank Stanger said, "The fruit of the Spirit refers to the kind of spiritual character that the Holy Spirit produces in a person who has received the gift of the Spirit."¹⁵ Paul in Colossians 3:12-14 encourages the believer to put on kindness, gentleness, love and several other virtues which are named in other places as the fruits of the Spirit. The fruits of the Spirit are the fruits of the Gospel enriched life.

The baptism of the Holy Spirit differs from sanctification. Sanctification cleanses the believer through the blood of Christ. The baptism of the Holy Spirit equips the believer for service. The baptism of the Holy Spirit sets the Christian on fire for God. The baptism of the Holy Spirit enthrones the Gospel of Christ in the life of the believer. The baptism of the Holy Spirit empowers the Gospel proclamation of Christ through the life of the believer. The baptism of the Holy Spirit enriches the life of the believer with the fruits of the Spirit. The baptism of the Holy Spirit is the good gift which the Father will give those who ask.

FOOTNOTES

¹Matthew 3:11, Mark 1:8, Luke 3:16, and John 1:33.

²See John 14:15-31; 16:5-16.

³Luke 11:11-13.

⁴Luke 11:13.

⁵James Elder Cumming, A Handbook on The Holy Spirit (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Dimension Books, 1965), p. 71.

⁶R. A. Torrey, The Holy Spirit (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1927), p. 117.

⁷The Analytical Greek Lexicon (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1970), p. 329.

⁸John 14:16-20.

⁹John 14:15-22.

¹⁰I Thessalonians 5:19-21.

¹¹Romans 12:6-8, I Corinthians 12:8-10, 28-30; Ephesians 4:11.

¹²Frank Bateman Stanger, The Gifts of the Spirit (Garrisburg, Pennsylvania: Christian Publications Inc., 1974), p. 8.

¹³Ibid., p. 12

¹⁴Stanger, op. cit., p. 9.

¹⁵Op. cit., p. 11

Chapter 9

LIVING AS WITNESSES

Text: Luke 24:36-49.

Goal: To enable hearers to understand the gospel message and to challenge them to become witnesses of Christ.

This text records the final appearance of Jesus to the apostles. The apostles were still mystified by the occurrences of the last month and a half. First, Jesus had entered Jerusalem accepted as one who came from God. Then Jesus had been taken and put to death on the cross. In the six weeks following his first resurrection appearance, Jesus appeared many times, to as many as five hundred at one time.¹

Now, as Luke closes his gospel, he reflects upon the backward look Jesus gave. Jesus taught the disciples concerning his coming death and resurrection, and the forgiveness of sins. Luke in closing his gospel gave only a slight forward glance to the commission Jesus gave his disciples to be witnesses. However, when writing of the beginning of the church in Acts, Luke tells of the same event with a forward look and places greater emphasis on the fact that the disciples of Jesus were to carry the gospel message to the world.

The Old Testament representatives of God on earth were three. First, the king was an earthly representative. The king was the administrator on earth. He was to look after the day by day welfare of the people. The second leadership role of the Old Testament was the priest. The

priest was a spiritual representative of God. He stood between God and man. The priest proclaimed the known word of God to the people and interceded on the part of the people. The third leader was the prophet. The prophet was a special spiritual leader. Smith's Bible Dictionary says they were "raised up and sent, as occasion required, to incite to duty, to convict of sin, to call to repentance and reformation, to instruct kings and denounce against nations the judgment of God."²

Jesus came to the world as king, but his kingdom was to be a spiritual kingdom instead of a kingdom on earth. The kingdom of heaven is entered by those, who with the faith of a child, believe in Jesus. The Gospel message is the message of good news in Jesus. Freedom from sin, freedom from guilt, freedom to live the type of life which is pleasing both to God and to the individual is the Gospel message. William Newell wrote a hymn in 1895 which is still loved because of the good news of the kingdom of heaven it expresses. The hymn is entitled, "Years I Spent in Vanity and Pride." Listen to the words of the second, third and fourth verses.

By God's Word at last my sin I learned;
Then I trembled at the law I'd spurned,
Till my guilty soul imploring turned to Calvary.

Now I've given to Jesus everything;
Now I gladly own Him as my King;
Now my raptured soul can only sing of Calvary.

O the love that drew salvation's plan!
O the grace that brought it down to man!
O the mighty gulf that God did span at Calvary!³

God in his mercy and grace has offered salvation to those who will turn to him. To those who are down-hearted, God offers hope in Christ. To those sick of sin, God offers salvation in Christ. To those who cannot endure the pressures of living up to the expectations of the law and everyone else, God offers freedom and power in Christ. The king-

dom of heaven has become a reality in the lives of those who believe in Jesus.

Through the lives of God's people the kingdom of heaven becomes a partial reality on earth. When God's people live by God's will, their lives produce fruit. The fruits produced are good works. One of the stories Jesus told showed how God expects his people to do good works. The story shows the king welcoming those who have been faithful to him. The king says,

Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.⁴

The people of the kingdom asked, "But when did we do this?"⁵ Whereupon the king indicated they had done this for him through the good works which had been done for those in need on the earth.⁶ The cup of water given to the thirsty stranger, God saw as given to him. The pair of shoes given the unemployed neighbor, God saw as being given to him. Jesus came to be a king,⁷ his kingdom is the kingdom of heaven. Its members are those who believe in Jesus and live for him. Christians are to live their lives as witnesses. The love of God is to be seen in their attitudes and actions.

Jesus also came as priest. The priesthood of Jesus was in obedience to God. Indeed, God sent Jesus to be the perfect priest. In obedience to God, Jesus came to earth, made atonement for man, and returned to heaven, where he now stands as the perfect priest forever.

Jesus as priest knows man and is able to sympathize with man.⁸ Since Jesus became man, he understood the trials and temptations of man. He knows the trickery of Satan and he knows the weaknesses of man, but he

also knows the power which God can give for living. Jesus understands man's failure and stands before God interceding for man's forgiveness. Jesus also understands the hope and power which God will give to man. Jesus through the Holy Spirit calls men into a life of power which God will give. The way to receive that power is through faith in Jesus.

Jesus is the perfect priest. Priests who are chosen by men must first offer sacrifice for their own sins and then for the people's sins. Jesus is without sin. The sacrifice that Jesus offers is not that of a sheep or a goat. Jesus offers his own life as the sacrifice for the sins of the world. This perfect sacrifice of Jesus offers atonement for the sins of all who will believe in Jesus. Jesus is the high priest who can meet the needs of mankind. He is obedient to God and sinless, yet he understands man and can intercede on their behalf before God. Hebrews 8:26 says,

Since a high priest meets our needs--one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens . . . He sacrificed for (the sins of the people) once for all when he offered himself. Because of this, Jesus was appointed the perfect high priest for God for all times.⁹

The people of God are to be a kingdom of priests.¹⁰ Revelation 1:5-6 is part of John's salutation to the churches. In this greeting, extended in the name of Jesus, John writes, "To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, and has made us a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father." The Christian is to be a priest. The Christian is to perform the dual role of the priest, that of representing God to those who do not know him, and that of representing man to God.

Jesus also came to earth as prophet. The gospel of John begins by telling us that Jesus is the word of God become flesh. William Smith wrote,

Christ, of whom all the prophets bore witness is the prophet

of His Church in all ages, revealing to them by His inspired servants, by Himself and by His Spirit all we know of God and immortality.¹¹

Jesus was the perfect prophet. The Scriptures tell us that Jesus was sent to earth at the fulness of time. Jesus not only taught the will of God, but he also showed it. Jesus not only lived the law through obedience to God, but he rebuked those who sought to make the law a means of earning one's salvation. These teachers of the law set up strict barriers which kept the people from being able to come to God. The Christian's relationship with God must be based on faith. The Christian must believe God and live by that belief. Jesus taught the people to trust God and live their lives for God. The Christian today has a living experience with God. The believer is to act as prophet, today, by sharing what God has done in his life and what God can do in the lives of those who will trust in Jesus.

Jesus spoke with his disciples during this last appearance on earth of his coming to earth. He explained how he had come to become the eternal king, the everlasting high priest and the perfect prophet. He explained to them that to fulfill his reasons for coming he must experience suffering, death, and resurrection. Hebrews 5:7-9 reads,

During the days of Jesus' life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. Although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered and, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who can obey him.

Jesus suffered in reverent submission. Many great Scriptures which exhort the Christian to this same reverent submission in trial, in withstanding temptation, and in persecution.

The victorious Christian life, which overcomes trials and tribulations can be seen in the life of Saul of Tarsus, who became known as the

Apostle Paul. When Ananias was sent to restore the sight of Saul, he was told to go with these words:

Go! This man is my chosen instrument to carry my name before the Gentiles and their kings and before the people of Israel. I will show him how much he must suffer for my name.¹²

Years later, Paul wrote of his life saying,

Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times have I been ship wrecked. . . I have been in danger from rivers, in dangers from bandits, in danger from my own countrymen, in danger from Gentiles, in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false brothers, I have. . . gone without sleep, . . . known hunger and thirst. . . I have been cold and naked. . . There was given me a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. But (God) said to me "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness. . . That is why, for Christ sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties."¹³

Jesus suffered and in that suffering learned obedience.

Through obedience, he was made perfect. Now he offers salvation to all men. Paul suffered, yet he found God's grace better in suffering than a life free from suffering without God's grace. James wrote to the Jewish Christians saying,

Consider it pure joy, . . . Whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith, develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work, ^{so} that you may be mature and complete not lacking anything.¹⁴

The Christian so called upon today may also be called upon to suffer for the one in whom they believe. The Christian so called upon can rejoice for that person will be drawn to the blessings of God through obedience to God.

Jesus died in obedience to God, but his death was also a gift to mankind. When facing death on the cross, Jesus took the sins of men upon him. The prophet Isaiah told of this saying, "He bore the sins of many, and made intercession for the transgressor."¹⁵ Paul in writing to

the Romans clarified this by saying, "We who are united with Christ in faith have been united with him in his death!"¹⁶ Christ died for our sins, so we should "die to sin."¹⁷

The resurrection of Jesus was victory over sin and the grave. For mankind the resurrection of Jesus is a symbol of the new birth which gives a living hope.¹⁸ Paul said, "Just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life."¹⁹ The power of God rose Jesus from physical death. It will cause the man who is dead to sin to be born into a life which can be lived for God.

These are the truths of which Jesus reminded his disciples in that final meeting. Then comes the challenge which was to begin the spread of the gospel around the world. This challenge was not only to the disciples present that day, but to every person who believes in Christ. Our text records the simple clear words Jesus used to express the challenge. "You are to be witnesses of these things" (vs. 48).

James Kennedy says, "The Church is a body under orders by Christ to share the Gospel with the whole world."²⁰ Many different presentations for proclaiming the gospel have been developed. Each of these presentations have their good and bad points, but each has been designed as a tool to share the gospel message with the world. The Christian should examine several of these presentations and learn one or more of the presentations which he or she feels comfortable using to share the gospel message.

The basic elements of the gospel message are the same. First, the individual must realize that he/she is a sinner. Paul in Romans wrote of two ways that the individual often tries to justify himself/herself. The first was is for an individual to say, "I have been taught God's laws from childhood and have kept the laws as well if not better than anyone."

This individual is trying to earn salvation by knowledge of the law. The second group is represented by the person who claims to have lived the best life which could be lived, not having grown up with the law of God. Paul points out to both groups that they are sinners because neither group lived by what they knew. He wrote,

All who sin apart from the law will also perish apart from the law, and all who sin under the law will be judged by the law. For it is not those who hear the law who are declared righteous in God's sight, but it is those who obey the law who will be declared righteous.²¹

Paul nails down the need of the individual to be saved in Romans 3:23 by saying, "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." Every person by his own actions qualifies as a sinner.

Second, the sinner must realize that the Savior is the only hope. Romans 6:23a tells us that the "wages of sin is death." The sinner, therefore, cannot or rather could not approach God except for the grace of God. Romans 6:23 does not end with death. It continues to say, "but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

Third, the sinner must know that this gift is through faith in Christ. John 1:12 says, "Yet to all who receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become the children of God. The relation of the individual and God which was broken by sin can be re-established through faith in Christ.

Fourth, the sinner must hear the news that God wants to change the life of the sinner. I John 1:7 says, "The blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from every sin." The life God wants the individual to live is the life which overcomes sin and disobedience. God wants the sinner to enter a life of victory.

The message which the church has to proclaim tells of salvation from sin, through Jesus, who is our king, our priest, and our prophet.

This message can heal the heart and soul of the sinner. It is the message which Christ came to earth to give. It is the message Christ has given his church to proclaim to the world. It is the message of hope which the world is waiting to hear. Are you doing your part to share it?

FOOTNOTES

¹I Corinthians 15:6

²William Smith, Smith Bible Dictionary (Philadelphia: A. J. Holman Company, n/d), p. 252.

³William Newell, "Years I Spent in Vanity and Pride," in Hymns of Faith and Life (Winona Lake, Indiana: Light and Life Press, 1976).

⁴Matthew 25:34-36.

⁵Matthew 25:37-39.

⁶Matthew 25:40.

⁷Matthew 16:28.

⁸Hebrews 4:14.

⁹Hebrews 7:28.

¹⁰Exodus 19:6.

¹¹Smith, *Op. cit.*, p. 253.

¹²Acts 9:15-16.

¹³II Corinthians 11:24-28; 12:7-10.

¹⁴James 1:2-4.

¹⁵Isaiah 53:12.

¹⁶Romans 6:5.

¹⁷Romans 6:2.

¹⁸I Peter 1:3.

¹⁹Romans 6:4.

²⁰James Kennedy, Evangelism Explosion (Wheaton, Illinois: Tyndale House Publishers, 1977), p. 2.

²¹Romans 2:12-13.

Chapter 10

CONCLUSION

Throughout history the church has proclaimed God's mercy and grace to the poor and to the rich. The success of the church has not been as great as Christians would like, yet it has been more successful than the enemies of the church would like to admit.

Today, Christianity continues to proclaim the Gospel. This message is proclaimed in skid row missions and in the crystal cathedral. The message is proclaimed in free America and in countries behind the iron and bamboo curtains. The Gospel is proclaimed in countries which lead the world and in Third World Nations. The name of Jesus Christ is worshiped by people who sit in comfort in cushioned pews and by people who, because of their faith, sit in the isolation cells of prisons. Each of these people see items in their culture which Christ is willing to change. Each Christian hopes and prays for the day when the will of God will be done on earth.

The thoughts and philosophies of the world continue to change, but the Christian message does not change. Culture changes from country to country and from year to year. The means of proclaiming the Gospel changes to meet the culture, but the Gospel message does not change.

As long as the individual is human, sin will reign in the individual's life. Only the Gospel message can offer hope in this battle

against sin. Only the power of God giving a new birth to the heart of the individual can return a person to the position of God's helper. Only the infilling of the Spirit of God can equip the individual to be God's helper.

In this series of sermon suggestions I have tried to show God's working in individuals throughout the history of the church. I have tried to distinguish between the church of God, which is the body of Christ, and the local church which develops so many problems. The local church is limited by the individuals who attend, some of whom are not true Christians. God's church will carry the message of the Father's love, of cleansing through the Son and of power from the Spirit, to every corner of earth. Every person shall be told of hope in Christ.

My prayer or maybe I could say our prayer is that we might do our part to proclaim God's Gospel message to the world. The message which Jesus proclaimed, which has been proclaimed by his church through the years, has now become our priveledge to proclaim as well. May God guide us and strengthen us for the task.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Aldrich, Joseph C. Life-Style Evangelism. Portland, Oregon: Multnomah Press, 1981
- Alexander, David and Pat Alexander, eds. Eerdmans' Handbook to the Bible. Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1973.
- Arndt, William F. and F. Wilbur Gingrich. A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1957.
- Barclay, William. The Letter to Romans. Edinburgh: The Saint Andrew Press, 1962.
- Barclay, William. The Promise of the Spirit. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1960.
- Bloesch, Donald G. The Christian Life and Salvation. Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1967.
- Bounds, E. M. A Treasury of Prayer, ed. Leonard Ravenhill. Minneapolis, Minnesota: Bethany Fellowship, Inc., 1961.
- Bromily, Geoffrey W., trans. and ed., Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, eds. Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1964.
- Clark, Adam. Entire Sanctification. Salem, Ohio: Schmul Convention Book Store, n/d.
- Coleman, Robert E. The Master Plan of Evangelism. Old Tappan, New Jersey: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1964.
- Cosgrove, Charles H. "The Mosaic Law Preaches Faith: A Study of Galatians 3." The Westminster Theological Journal (Fall 1978), pp. 146-164.
- Cumming, James Elder. A Handbook on the Holy Spirit. Minneapolis, Minnesota: Dimension Books, 1965.
- DeHaan, M. R. Law or Grace. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1965.
- Ellul, Jacques. Prayer and Modern Man. New York: The Seabury Press, 1970.

- Fenelon, Francois de Salingnor de La Mothe. Christian Perfection, ed. Charles Whiston, trans. Mildred Stillman. New York: Harper and Row, 1947.
- Forell, George Wolfgang. The Christian Lifestyle. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975.
- Gee, Donald. Concerning Spiritual Gifts. Springfield, Missouri: Gospel Publishing House, 1963.
- Godbey, W. B. Spiritual Gifts and Graces. Cincinnati: M. W. Knapp, 1895.
- Graham, Billy. The Holy Spirit. Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1978.
- The Greek-English New Testament. Washington, D. C.: Christianity Today, 1975.
- Griffiths, Michael. Grace Gifts. Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1979.
- Hallesby, O. Prayer, trans. Clarence J. Carlsen. Minneapolis, Minnesota: Augsburg Publishing House, 1959.
- Halverson, Richard C. Christian Maturity. Los Angeles: Cowman Publishing Company, Inc., 1956.
- Harvey, J. D. Dimensions in Christian Living. Winona Lake, Indiana: Light and Life Press, 1973.
- Henrichsen, Walter A. Disciples Are Made Not Born. Wheaton, Illinois: Victor Books, 1974.
- Henry, Carl F. H. Christian Personal Ethics. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1957.
- Hymns of Faith and Life. Winona Lake, Indiana: Light and Life Press, 1976.
- Jones, E. Stanley. Christian Maturity. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1957.
- Kane, J. Herbert. Christian Missions in Biblical Perspective. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1976.
- Kennedy, D. James. Evangelism Explosion. Wheaton, Illinois: Tyndale House Publishers, 1970.
- Kingsley, Charles W. Do: Manifesto for Concerned Christian Community. Winona Lake, Indiana: Light and Life Men International, n/d.
- Kingsley, Charles W. and George Delamarter. Go! Revolutionary New Testament Christianity. Winona Lake, Indiana: Light and Life Men's Fellowship, 1965.

- Koch, Kurt. Charismatic Gifts. Quebec, Canada: The Association For Christian Evangelism (Quebec) Inc., 1975.
- Latourette, Kenneth Scott. A History of Christianity. New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1975.
- Lewis, C. S. Beyond Personality. New York: The MacMillian Company, 1952.
- Meyer, F. B. Christian Living. Harrisburg, Pa.: The Christian Alliance Publishing Co., n/d.
- McRae, William. The Dynamics of Spiritual Gifts. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1967.
- Meilaender, Gilbert. "The Place of Ethics in the Theological Task." Currents in Theology and Missions, August 1979, pp. 196-203.
- Metz, Donald S. Studies in Biblical Holiness. Kansas City, Missouri: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1971.
- Miller, Keith. The Becomers. Waco, Texas: Word Books Publishers, 1973.
- Miller, Keith. The Taste of New Wine. Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1965.
- Moulton, Harold K., ed. The Analytical Greek Lexicon Revised. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1977.
- Murray, Andrew. Be Perfect. Minneapolis, Minnesota: Bethany Fellowship, Inc., 1965.
- Narramore, Bruce. "Discipline By Grace." Journal of Psychology and Theology, Winter 1979, pp. 263-270.
- The New International Version of the Holy Bible. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Bible Publishers, 1978.
- Packo, John E. Find and Use Your Spiritual Gifts. Harrisburg, Pennsylvania: Christian Publications, Inc., 1980.
- Purkiser, W. T. Exploring Our Christian Faith. Kansas City, Missouri: 1960.
- Search The Scriptures. Colorado Springs, Colorado: NavPress, 1974.
- Shelley, Bruce, ed. A Call to Christian Character. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1970.
- Smith, William. Smith's Bible Dictionary. Philadelphia: A. J. Holman Company, n/d.
- Spear, Wayne R. The Theology of Prayer. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1979.

- Stanger, F. B. The Gifts of the Spirit. Harrisburg, Pennsylvania: Christian Publications, Inc., 1974.
- Strong, James. The Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible. Iowa Falls, Iowa: Riverside Book and Bible House, n/d.
- Stott, John R. W. Christian Mission in the Modern World. Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1975.
- Stoyiannos, Basilios. "The Law in the New Testament from an Orthodox Point of View." The Greek Orthodox Theological Review, Winter 1979, pp. 309-322.
- Tam, Stanley. Every Christian a Soul Winner, as told to Ken Anderson. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Inc. Publishers, 1975.
- Taylor, J. Paul. Holiness the Finished Foundation. Winona Lake, Indiana: Light and Life Press, 1963.
- Taylor, Richard S. Preaching Holiness Today. Kansas City, Missouri: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1968.
- Thomas, Robert L. Understanding Spiritual Gifts. Chicago: Moody Press, 1978.
- Torrey, R. A. The Power of Prayer and the Prayer of Power. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1924.
- Torrey, R. A. The Holy Spirit. New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1927.
- Turner, George Allen. The Vision Which Transforms. Kansas City, Missouri: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1964.
- Unger, Merrill F. The Baptism and Gifts of the Holy Spirit. Chicago: Moody Press, 1974.
- Venable, Charles Leslie. The Threshold of the Temple. New York: Richard R. Smith, Inc., 1931.
- Vine, W. E. A Comprehensive Dictionary of the Original Greek Words with their Precise Meanings for English Readers. McLean, Virginia: MacDonald Publishing Company, n/d.
- Warren, Max. I Believe in the Great Commission. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1976.
- Watson, David. I Believe in the Church. Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1978.
- Wesley, John. Christian Perfection. Cincinnati: Jennings and Pye, n/d.

- Wesley, John. Christian Perfection as Taught by John Wesley, ed. J. A. Wood. Boston: McDonald and Gill Publishers, 1885.
- Wesley, John. Wesley's Doctrinal Standards. Part I, The Sermons, ed. Rev. N. Burwash. Salem, Ohio: Schmul Publishers, 1881.
- Whitesell, F. D. Power in Expository Preaching. United States: Fleming H. Revel Co., 1943.
- Wigram, George V. The Englishman's Greek Concordance. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1979.