

Important Questions

For the Christian!

13 Lessons

Prepared by:
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2006

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Lesson One

“Which One Are We?”

(Rev. 3:14-22)

INTRODUCTION

1. In 2 Cor. 13:5, we are encouraged to look at ourselves, examine ourselves carefully to be sure we are committed to Christ.
 - a) 2 Cor. 13:5—**“Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you are disqualified.”**
2. In this same book, God’s people are warned not to measure themselves by each other.
 - a) 2 Cor. 10:12—**“For we dare not class ourselves or compare ourselves with those who commend themselves. But they, measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise.”**
 - b) Our standard of measurement is Christ, what He teaches. **(1 Cor. 11:1; 2 John 9).**
3. In our study:
 - a) We want to look passages that identify the kind of persons that make up the church.
 - b) Then, we want to ask the question, “Which One are we?”

DISCUSSION**I. THE DIFFERENT KINDS OF PERSONS IN THE CHURCH:****A. New Member.**

- 1) A new Christian that has just begun their walk with Christ.
- 2) Acts 6:7—**“Then the word of God spread, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith.”**

B. A Weak Brother.

- 1) One who is learning, growing, but hasn’t stabilized in God’s truth as yet.
- 2) Rom. 14:1—**“Receive one who is weak in the faith, but not to disputes over doubtful things.”**

C. A Lukewarm Brother.

- 1) One who feels they have arrived and are just coasting into heaven.
- 2) But in reality, they have a wrong picture of themselves—perverted view.
- 3) They are neither zealous for the Lord, nor have they entirely turned their backs on Him.
- 4) Rev. 3:15-16—**“I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth.”**

D. A Carnally-minded Brother (worldly-minded).

- 1) Their main concern is not spiritual things, but carnal, physical things.
- 2) Rom. 8:5-6—**“For those who live according to the flesh set their**

minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.”

E. A Fearful Brother.

- 1) One who is unsure of his relationship with God because of the way he is living.
- 2) His fear is allowed to paralyze him in his service to God.
- 3) Rev. 21:8—*“But the cowardly (fearful), unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone which is the second death.”*

F. A Brother over-taken in a fault.

- 1) One who is not dealing with continuing sin in his life and is on the verge of giving up.
- 2) One who does not allow God’s truth to direct his life as he should.
- 3) James 5:19-20—*“Brethren, if anyone among you wanders from the truth, and someone turns him back, let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins.”*

G. A Brother who is strong, grounded, and sound in the faith—he is steadfast, growing, and maturing.

- 1) This is, of course, what all Christians should strive to be!
- 2) Heb. 5:12-14—*“For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word or righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.”*
- 3) 1 Cor. 15:58—*“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.”*

II. NOW TO OUR QUESTION:

A. Which one of these descriptions fit my life before God?

- 1) We need to do our best to be honest—for we do not deceive God.
- 2) And trying to justify a non-committed life by comparing ourselves with others who are not committed will not deceive God—only ourselves!

B. Of course, maybe a better question would be—Which One would you like to be?

- 1) A desirable Christian life does not come by wishful thinking.
- 2) It can come only by great effort on our part.

III. EACH OF US HAS BEEN GIVEN A CHALLENGE—GROW UP!

A. God wants His children to grow up and be mature.

- 1) The need is great!
- 2) It is needed in our homes, in the church, and in our society.

- 3) Eph. 4:15—“*Till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect (complete or mature) man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.*”

B. We have no greater challenge—nor STRUGGLE!

- 1) To grow up and take our place in society and in the church.
- 2) To be reliable and responsible persons.
- 3) Thankfully, we do not have to struggle alone—we have help.
- 4) And, the end result is well worth the struggle.
- 5) It is encouraging to be around mature Christians:
 - a) To see strong loyalty for God’s Truth;
 - b) To see godly lives lived before our eyes;
 - c) To see good works being done;
 - d) To see liberal giving of self, time, talents, and money.
 - e) To see God being glorified by His children.

IV. AGAIN, CAN WE LOOK INWARD AND ASK:

1. **Is Christ truly my example to follow?**
2. **Am I adapting my life to teachings of Christ?**
3. **Am I striving to walk in the steps of Jesus?**
4. **Do I daily remind myself: “I no longer live, but Christ lives in me?”**
5. **Am I trying to learn Christ’s thoughts, attitudes, goals, and desires?**
6. **Is my purpose in life to glorify Christ in all I do and say?**

V. HOW CAN I BECOME THIS MATURE CHRISTIAN?

A. If I do not feel that I am there; then, what do I need to do?

B. I must desire it above all else.

- 1) Matt. 6:33
- 2) 2 Pet. 3:18—“***But grow in the grace and knowledge of our lord and Savior Jesus Christ....***”
- 3) Illustration:
 - a) Socrates was a Greek Philosopher—well-known.
 - b) He was approached by a disciple and asked: “*What do I have to do to become a learned man like you?*”
 - c) He motioned for the disciple to follow him to the river.
 - d) They waded waist deep....
 - e) Socrates turned and grabbed the man’s head and plunged it under the water.
 - f) Finally, he let him up gasping for air.
 - g) He asked the young man: “*What did you desire the most?*”
 - h) “*Air!*” the man said.
 - i) Socrates then said: “*When you desire knowledge as intensely as you wanted air, you’ll find a way to get it.*”

C. But, this growth must come through the Word of God!

- 1) 1 John 5:4—“***This is the victory that overcomes the world—even our faith.***”
- 2) But how do we build this kind of faith that makes us victorious?

- 3) Rom. 10:17—“*So then, faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.*”
- 4) We must be constantly in the Word—learning & applying it to our lives!

CONCLUSION

1. The church needs to keep a strong emphasis upon growth as a congregation.
2. But that can only come when each individual grows and matures in Christ.

Lesson Two

“Where are My Affections?”

(Col. 3:1-6)

INTRODUCTION

1. Where are my affections?
2. The reason why this question is important.....
 - a) Matt. 6:21—***“For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”***
 - b) What we treasure is shown by our affections!
3. The question infers we have a choice to make!
 - a) Matt. 6:24—***“No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.”***
 - b) So, we can place our affections on this earth and all it has to offer.
 - c) Or on things above!
4. The Christian is encouraged to logically place his affections, mind, heart, desires on things above!

DISCUSSION**I. WHY PLACE OUR AFFECTIONS ON THINGS ABOVE?*****A. Verse 3—“For you died...with Christ!”***

- Rom. 6:1-2
- You made a decision to die to the things of this world.
- To no longer walk the way of sin.
- James 4:4—***Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.”***
- Such is a choice we made when we became a Christian.
- We need to recommit ourselves daily to this way of life.

B. Verse 1—“...you were raised with Christ!”

- Rom. 6:3-4
- The old man of sin was buried in a watery grave.
- He was raised up to walk in newness of life.
- 1 John 1:6—***“If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth.”***
- We made a commitment to live a new life—let’s live up to it.

C. Verse 3—“Your life is hidden with Christ in God!”

- Rom. 6:11—We have found our place of safety and refuge—in Christ!
- Jn. 14:6—He is our way to the Father.

D. Verse 4—“When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.”

- Our glorification depends upon keeping our affections on the right things.
- Not on fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness. (Verse 5)

- It is because of these things that God's wrath comes upon the disobedient. (Verse 6)
- Rom. 6:19—*"For just as you presented your members as slaves of uncleanness, and of lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves of righteousness for holiness."*

II. WHERE SHOULD OUR AFFECTIONS NOT BE PLACED?

A. Not on the Love of money. (1 Tim. 6:10)

- Monday can become our God who we worship.
- We can be rich in this world's goods, but not be rich towards God (Lk. 12:21).
- We need to lay up treasures in Heaven with what we have (Matt. 6:20-21).
- Mark 4:19

B. Not on the Pleasures of this life. (2 Tim. 3:4)

- Luke 8:14—*Now the ones that fell among thorns are those who, when they have heard, go out and are coked with cares, riches, and pleasures of life, and bring no fruit to maturity."*
- These pleasures are very desirable to satisfy the desires of the flesh, but they cause us to be lost.
- The sad thing about pleasures of this world—they are only temporary.
- Moses found this out (Heb. 11:24-25).

C. Not on this world. (1 John 2:15)

- We are admonished not to love the world or the things in the world (1 John 2:15).
- The reason—The world and its lust passes away, but he who does God's Will abides forever (1 John 2:16-17).
- We are in the world, but we are not to be of the world (John 17:14-16).
- Friendship with the world is enmity with God (James 4:4).
- We are to come out of the world and touch not the unclean things (2 Cor. 6:14-18).

D. Not on places of pre-eminence. (Luke 11:43)

- *The Apostles struggled with this problem (Matt. 20:20-28; Jn. 13:1-17).*
- *Not one time, but more than once—the message was slow to get through!*
- *God's people are not to seek places of pre-eminence (Phi. 2:3).*

E. Not the praise of men over the praise of God. (John 12:42-43)

- **Matt. 6:1-8, 16-18....**We are not to pray or fast to be seen or praised by men.
- We must seek to please God and not men (Gal. 1:10).
- The Apostles stated it rightly in Acts 5:28-29).

F. Not on the wages of unrighteousness. (2 Peter 2:15)

- False teachers were misleading people in order to get gain.
- The reason why they were able to do so was two-fold:
 1. *People wanted their ears tickled (2 Tim. 4:1-4).*
 2. *They really didn't love (have their affections on truth) (2 Thess. 2:10-12).*

G. Not on wearing titles. (Matt. 23:6-10)

- Such people like the adulation of men!
- They seek to be called by special titles that set them apart.

- The Christian is a humble, meek, gentle person—desiring to serve (James 4:6-10).

CONCLUSION

1. It is very important to know where our affections lie!
 - a) We need to look carefully at ourselves.
 - b) To be honest with ourselves.
 - c) What do we think on most?
 - d) What do we hate to give up most?
2. We have been raised with Christ:
 - a) To a New Aim
 - b) To a New Heart
 - c) To a New Life
 - d) To a New Hope.
3. Daily...these become more and more important.
4. While the things of the earth become less important.

Lesson Three

“What Kind of Faith Do You Have?”

(James 2:17-24)

INTRODUCTION

1. There is a strong emphasis upon faith in the Bible!
 - a) John 1:12—***“But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name...”***
 - b) John 3:16—***“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”***
 - c) Rom. 1:16-17—***“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, ‘The just shall live by faith.’”***
 - d) Rom. 5:1—***“Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”***
 - e) A long list of passages could be given that stress the necessity of faith to be right with God.
2. But, it is a grave mistake to conclude from these passages that justification is by faith alone!
 - a) The very opposite is taught in many different ways.
 - b) Rom. 5:9—***“Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him.”***
 - c) One of two things is obvious:
 - Faith & the blood of Christ are in conflict;
 - Or, they are both involved in our justification.
 - And—It should be obvious that they both are necessary to our salvation.
 - d) But look at how many things work together to bring about our salvation in just this one chapter (Rom. 5):
 - 5:1—by faith.
 - 5:2—by grace.
 - 5:9—by His blood.
 - 5:17-18—by Christ's Righteousness.
 - 5:19—By Christ's Obedience.
 - All are involved, all are essential, all mesh together to provide redemption for fallen man.
3. It should be obvious that salvation by faith alone is an impossibility.
 - a) “Faith alone” would eliminate God's grace, Christ's Blood, Christ's Righteousness, and Christ's Obedience.
 - b) The very term is very misleading!
 - c) Man's salvation involves both God's Work and Man's Work to be complete.
4. But it is advocated that man's part in his salvation is by Faith Alone!
 - a) That God has had to do His part.
 - b) Now man must do His part.
 - c) And that part is “Faith Alone.”

5. Let's look at this concept a little more in depth.

DISCUSSION

I. NEED TO CLARIFY SOMETHING!

A. The question is not whether faith is necessary to our salvation.

- 1) This is an obvious fact overwhelmingly stated in Scripture.
- 2) The thing that needs to be dealt with is the question.... *"What kind of faith do we have to have to be saved?"*

B. There are various levels or kinds of faith mentioned in Scripture.

- 1) The 12 disciples (apostles) had left all to follow Christ.
 - a) You would think that they really believed in Jesus.
 - b) Yet, upon several occasions, Jesus rebuked one or more of them for their "little faith."
 - c) Matt. 14:31—(To Peter) *"And immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and caught him, and said to him, 'O you of little faith, why did you doubt.'"*
- 2) The apostles evidently got the message towards the end of Jesus' public ministry.
 - a) Shown by a request they made.
 - b) Lk. 17:5—*"And the apostles said to the Lord, 'increase our faith.'"*
 - c) They were recognizing the weakness & shallowness of their faith in comparison to what it ought to be.
- 3) Jesus' next statement to them was trying to drive this point home!
 - a) Lk. 17:6—*"So the Lord said, 'If you have faith as a mustard seed, you can say to this mulberry tree, 'Be pulled up by the roots and be planted in the sea,' and it would obey you.'"*
 - b) Here are men who had left all to follow Jesus—yet, their faith was far from what it ought to be.
- 4) **Matt. 8:5-12**
 - a) Notice the contrast Jesus makes in faith.
 - b) The apostles were in this audience, as well as many religious people.
 - c) Here was a Centurion—a Roman soldier—a Gentile who showed more faith than even Jesus' close disciples.
 - d) Jesus marveled at the man's faith!
- 5) Even in the church, we can see the same distinctions being made.
 - a) Rom. 14-15 talks about those weak in the faith and those strong in the faith.
 - Rom. 15:1—*"We then who are strong ought to bear with the scruples of the weak, and not to please ourselves."*
 - b) Paul praised the Thessalonians for their faith.
 - 2 Thess. 1:3—*"We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is fitting, because your faith grows exceedingly, and the love of every one of you all abounds toward each other."*
 - c) Paul also praised the Thessalonians for their working faith.
 - 1 Thess. 1:3—*"Remembering without ceasing your work of faith..."*
 - d) The 7 men who were appointed to serve tables in Acts 6 were men full of faith.
 - Acts 6:5—*"And they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit..."*

- e) James talked about the poor and the kind of faith they possessed.
 - James 2:5—"*Listen, my beloved brethren: Has God not chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love him?*"
- f) But, in stark contrast to this, James talks about a different kind of faith.
 - James 2:17-20
 - It wasn't a weak faith or a growing faith.
 - It was a dead faith—because it did not show obedience to God.
 - This kind of faith cannot justify us!
- 6) Thus, it would seem to be obvious:
 - a) That it is not only important what we believe....
 - b) But, our faith needs to be the right kind of faith.

II. THE NECESSITY FOR OUR FAITH TO GROW, DEVELOP, INTO A FULLNESS & GREATNESS.

A. We first need to have the kind of faith that brings us into a saved relationship with God.

- 1) A faith puts our trust in the death of Christ to make our salvation possible.
- 2) A faith that leads us to make a decision to turn from sinful living to godly living. (Repentance)
- 3) A faith that causes us to openly confess Jesus as both Lord and Christ in my life.
- 4) A faith that leads us to be immersed into the death of Christ for the forgiveness of sins. (**Acts 2:37-41**)
- 5) Is this the end of the picture—Have we arrived with our faith?
- 6) The obvious answer is no—we have just begun in faith!

B. The development of a strong faith is needed.

- 1) Our faith needs to be fed so it can grow, increase, and become full, complete, and steadfast!
- 2) 1 Cor. 15:58—"*Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.*"

C. The N.T. has a word for this concept...."FAITHFULNESS"

- 1) Rev. 2:10—"*Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life.*" (*Full of Faith*)
- 2) Rev. 17:14—"*These will make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, for He is Lord of lords and King of kings; and those who are with Him are called, chosen, and faithful.*"
- 3) **Heb. 3:12-14**

CONCLUSION

- 1. The reason for stressing the necessity of faith should be obvious—for without faith we cannot please God. (Heb. 11:6)
- 2. It is not enough to say, "I believe"—A dead faith is worthless!
- 3. We need a faith that is increasing, growing, becoming strong & stable—Full & obedient.
- 4. A faith that can keep us close to God all our lives.

Lesson Four

“What is a Successful Church?”

(Rev. 3:7-13)

INTRODUCTION

1. “Success” is an important word in the minds of most people.
2. We all like to be successful in our efforts.
3. Questions:
 - a) Would you like to be successful in business?
 - b) Would you like to be a successful scholar in school or college?
 - c) Would you like to be a successful father or mother?
 - d) Would you like to be a successful husband or wife?
 - e) On & on the questions could go.
 - f) And the answer would be obvious—“Yes!”
4. The need for succeeding seems to be a part of man’s make-up.
 - a) We need to feel successful in order to be happy & well-adjusted in life.
 - b) A healthy self-image seems to be dependent upon succeeding in some things in life.
 - c) Failure is a negative & destructive influence that can eventually destroy us.
5. Let me illustrate:
 - a) Let’s suppose that there are two congregations of the Lord’s people in a given city.
 - b) Church #1:
 - Nice building.
 - About 60 members—maintaining their numbers.
 - Building kept nice, neat & clean.
 - Worship is proper—but there seems to be something lacking.
 - Doctrine is pure...no false things being taught.
 - They seem to be wrapped up in themselves.
 - c) Church #2:
 - Nice building, but may have to enlarge it soon.
 - New people being reached.
 - Worship is proper—but there is also a good spirit among the people.
 - Members enjoy being with one another & working together.
 - Doctrine is pure—but truth taught in love.
 - Members are eager to share the message with others.
 - d) If you moved to town—which of the two would you choose to work & worship with?
 - Analyze why you would choose the one and not the other.
 - Which would you consider successful?
 - What standard of measurement would you use to determine such?

DISCUSSION

I. WHAT MAKES A SUCCESSFUL CHURCH?

A. What will be our standard for measurement?

- 1) We obviously should not use human standards.
- 2) We need to see what God’s word says about it.

- 3) A good measurement might be found in the 7 churches of Asia.
- B. Things the 7 churches were praised for:**
- 1) For their **Faith, Patience, and Love** as a people of God.
 - 2) For their continuous **Labor and Works** in serving God & man—and even growing in such.
 - 3) For their **Faithfulness to Christ, to His Name, to His Word** in the midst of opposition, persecution, and even death.
 - 4) For their **Hating of evil, Immorality, and False religious Beliefs**, as well as, their **Handling of False Teachers** in their midst.
 - 5) For their taking advantage of even small opportunities to serve God.
- C. Things the 7 churches were condemned or warned against:**
- 1) For their **Turning from their first love**.
 - 2) For their **Indifference, Self-satisfied condition—Lukewarmness**.
 - 3) For their **Giving into pressures & becoming like the world** about them.
 - 4) For their **Weak handling of immorality & false doctrines** among them.
 - 5) For their **Dead Spiritual condition**—going backwards.
 - 6) For their **Growing weary in well-doing**—not finishing God’s work among them.

II. SOME OBSERVATIONS ON THESE THINGS:

- A. What is said about growth in numbers?**
- 1) No mention is made either way.
 - 2) This doesn’t mean that numbers are not important.
 - a) For each number represents a soul saved from eternal punishment.
 - b) Numbers can indicate that the church has had a successful outreach.
 - c) Thus, we want to see numbers!
 - 3) When Paul & Barnabas returned from their 1st missionary journey:
 - a) They told how God had blessed their efforts with fruit among the Gentiles.
 - b) Acts 15:3—“.....and they caused great joy unto all the brethren.”
 - c) We also rejoice to hear of souls baptized into Christ.
 - 4) But numbers alone cannot indicate a successful church.
 - a) If all other things are as they should be.....it is likely that the numbers will come.
 - b) It is important to realize that God did not make this a basic criteria for determining a successful church.
- B. What about a doctrinally sound church?**
- 1) Soundness in the faith is desirable.
 - 2) Jesus commends such in these letters.
 - 3) A successful church will hate evil and deal with false teachers.
 - 4) But it is only one of the measurements of a successful church.
 - 5) Ephesus was a sound church, but not pleasing to God—Left their first love.
- C. What about a giving church?**
- 1) God expects his people to be a giving people.
 - a) Not only to help carry on His work;
 - b) But, also, because it is more blessed to give than to receive.
 - 2) He expects His people to be liberal, willing, and cheerful givers.

- 3) Laodicea seems to have had all of these.
 - a) ***“I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing.”***
 - b) They were probably quite impressive as a group.
 - 4) Wealth in a congregation can be a blessing or a curse as well.
 - a) A lot of things can be done to bless others.
 - b) Or, it can become a Laodicean church—lukewarm, insipid, and sickening to the Lord.
 - 5) A successful church will be a giving church.
 - 6) But this is only one criterion to be used.
- D. What about a busy and active church?***
- 1) Most of the 7 churches were busy & active.
 - 2) The church at Thyatira was:
 - a) Commended for their Works, Love, Service, Faith, and Patience.
 - b) But condemned for condoning & winking at false teachers and the evil being practiced among them.
 - 3) Being busy and active is only one criteria for success before God.

CONCLUSION

1. Are we a successful congregation of the Lord?
 - a) Do we see a high & noble purpose for us to pursue?
 - b) Do we have a confidence that God is working in us and for us?
 - c) Are we patient & persistent in serving God and man?
 - d) Are we faithful to God and His Truth?
 - e) Do we show a loving attitude towards all?
 - f) Do we hate evil, immorality, and false religious beliefs that condemn the soul?
 - g) Do we take advantage of even small opportunities that come our way?
2. What am I contributing to help make this a successful church before God?

Lesson Five

“To What are You Devoted?”

(Acts 17:16-23)

INTRODUCTION

1. On the Apostle Paul's 2nd missionary tour he came to the city of Athens.
 - a) It was a city of learning & a city of philosophers.
 - b) Yet—a city wholly given to idolatry.
 - c) When Paul saw this—***“his spirit was stirred within him.”***
 - 1) How could such a city of learning be so steeped in ignorance?
 - 2) They needed desperately the knowledge of the one true God.
 - d) Paul sought an opportunity to preach to them—and it was given him.
2. Their devotions impressed Paul, but not the objects of their devotion.
 - a) He could see their worshipful attitude to their many gods.
 - b) They had invested their TIME, ENERGIES, and MONEY as well.
 - c) Their beliefs were openly & freely shown to all.
 - 1) Their temples, altars, inscriptions were for all to see.
 - 2) Nobody had to tell Paul what they highly revered.
 - 3) He could readily perceive it.
 - d) But the objects of their devotions greatly alarmed Paul.
 - e) He wanted to help them turn their devotion to the one true & living God.
3. Now, what about our devotions?
 - a) To what & to whom are we devoted?
 - b) Can people easily discover them?
 - c) And are our objects of devotion worthy of such devotion?
 - d) Can we be turned from unworthy objects of devotion by God's Truth?

DISCUSSION**I. TO WHAT SHOULD CHRISTIANS BE DEVOTED?*****A. Col. 3:22-24***

- 1) Work is honorable & necessary for mankind's well-being.
- 2) Christians should strive to do their job well—as unto the Lord.
- 3) 2 Thess. 3:10—***“...if any would not work, neither should he eat.”***
- 4) Doing our job well is showing devotion to God—for He commanded such.

B. Eph. 6:1-3

- 1) Children should be devoted to their parents.
- 2) To honor them, respect them, care for them.
- 3) Mark 7:9-13
- 4) Failure to be devoted to parents is a sin.
- 5) Devotion to parents is a way of showing our devotion to God—for He commanded such.

C. Eph. 6:4

- 1) Parents should be devoted to their children.
- 2) Shown by teaching, training, encouraging, and providing for them.
- 3) To honor them as a gift from God—not a rope around our necks!

- 4) Devotion to our children is a way of showing our devotion to God—for He commanded such.

D. Eph. 5:22-25

- 1) Husbands & Wives should be devoted to each other.
- 2) It should be shown by the way we treat each other privately & publicly.
- 3) To fail to do so is sin—and our prayers will be hindered.
- 4) 1 Pet. 3:7—"*Husbands, likewise, dwell with them with understanding, giving honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered.*"
- 5) Eph. 5:33—"*...and let the wife see that she respects her husband.*"
- 6) Devotion to our mate is a way of showing our devotion to God—for He commanded such.

II. BUT—THERE IS A DANGER THAT MUST BE AVOIDED.

A. *When our devotions cause us to disobey God—we have stepped over the line with our devotions.*

- 1) Our devotion to governing powers is to be there. (Rom. 13:1-7)
 - a) But when we are faced with a choice between government & God...
 - b) Then, God comes first in our devotions.
 - c) Acts 5:29—*(Peter & John had to make that decision) "...we ought to obey God rather than man."*
- 2) When we have to make a choice between our devotion to God or our parents, children, mate, possessions—we must choose God.
 - a) Luke 14:26—*"If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple."*
 - b) There are definite times when this choice will have to be made.
 - c) Gal. 1:10—*".....do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ."*

III. WE MUST NOT TRY TO HIDE OUR TRUE DEVOTIONS!

A. *Sooner or later—men will see what we are anyway.*

- 1) Men will read us for what we are.
- 2) Our attitudes will show if we are devoted, as we should be.
- 3) Jesus said, *"Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."* (Mt. 6:21).
- 4) People will put more stock in WHAT WE DO, than WHAT WE SAY.
- 5) Mt. 5:16—*"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven."*

B. *Unto what do men see we have erected our altars of devotions?*

- 1) To SELF or to CHRIST?
- 2) To PLEASURE or to RIGHTEOUSNESS?
- 3) To the GOD OF THIS WORLD or to the TRUE GOD OF HEAVEN?
- 4) To SENSUALITY or to SPIRITUALITY?
- 5) To MONEY or to the MASTER?
- 6) To HONESTY or HYPOCRISY?
- 7) To seek the PRAISE OF MEN or the PRAISE OF GOD?

C. Is our devotion to Christ as evident as the Athenian's devotions?

- 1) It is not enough to say with our mouth "*Jesus is Lord.*"
- 2) Do our actions support this?
 - a) Matt. 7:21
 - b) Luke 6:46
- 3) Can they see that Christ is the CENTER around which my life revolves?
- 4) Do they see a life that has put off the old man with its sins: STEALING, LYING, LUSTFUL INDULGENCES, ANGER, WRATH, BITTERNESS, EVIL SPEAKING, MALICE?
- 5) And one that has put on: RIGHTEOUSNESS, KINDNESS, TENDERHEARTEDNESS, COMPASSION, FORGIVENESS, LOVE, LONG-SUFFERING, FAITH, HONESTY, Etc.?

CONCLUSION

1. We all have our devotions.
2. Are we devoted to the right things & people?
3. Are they worthy devotions?
4. Do we have a supreme devotion to God & His kingdom? (Mt. 6:33)
5. If not, why not make that decision today!

Lesson Six

“What Do You More Than Others?”

(Matt. 5:43-48)

INTRODUCTION

1. Some of Jesus’ most effective teaching was through asking challenging questions.
2. In Matt. 5:43-48, He is asking two specific questions:
 - a) **“For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same?”**
 - b) **“And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the tax collectors do so?”**
3. All men do some good...even those considered the more sinful.
4. Many factors encourage this:
 - a) Our family and their affections.
 - b) Requirements of society...Laws of men.
 - c) Rewards of society for good actions.
 - d) Natural affection for other human beings.
 - e) etc.
5. But followers of Jesus are called upon to go beyond the natural good of men to a higher calling!
 - a) If we are no different from the goodness of the world—what challenge is there in following Christ?
 - b) If we only love those who love us—what are we doing more than they?

DISCUSSION**I. JESUS CHALLENGES US TO HONESTLY EVALUATE OURSELVES.*****A. Being too satisfied with our lives can be dangerous.***

- 1) *1 Cor. 10:12—“Wherefore to him that thinks he stands, take heed lest he fall...”*
- 2) *Lk. 18:9—“And He spoke this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others.”*
- 3) Humility & Honesty pays big dividends with God.

B. Dishonesty & Deception must be dealt with in my life.

- 1) *1 Jn. 1:8-10*
- 2) Honesty about one’s self is not easy.
 - a) Can I honestly face up to my desire for the wrong things?
 - b) Am I willing to admit that I am self-centered too much?
 - c) Can I openly admit:
 - I do things to get recognition;
 - I desire power over others.
 - I desire social acceptance—even if I have to compromise.
 - My desire for this world is greater than my desire for heaven?
- 3) Without honesty—I quickly forget these things.
- 4) And the Word of God has no affect upon my life.

II. JESUS CHALLENGES US TO SEE THE NEED FOR CHANGE.

A. Spiritual change can only come when I see myself as God sees me.

- 1) Self-deception tells us we have no need for change.
- 2) Change comes from dissatisfaction of self.
- 3) ***“If you love those who love you—what have you done?”***

B. Spiritual change must use the right standard!

- 1) Humans have a tendency to compare themselves with one another.
- 2) The problem is—we pick people as good or worse than us.
 - a) *“I’m as good as so-in-so.”*
 - b) *“I ‘m as good as that so-called Christian.”*
 - c) *“I’m better than that person.”*
- 3) Humans are really invalid standards!
- 4) Jesus left us an example to follow Him. (1 Peter 2:21)
- 5) His example challenges us to make some needed changes.

C. However, some times human examples are challenging to us.

- 1) When they sacrifice in order to follow Christ.
- 2) When we see religious people who have more zeal than we do.
- 3) When we see others giving of themselves unselfishly to help spread the kingdom of heaven.
- 4) When we see retired people still out there serving in the kingdom.

D. Jesus’ questions can be embarrassing!

- 1) But, they can awaken us to help make some needed changes in our lives.
- 2) They can cause us to re-look at our: Loyalty, Dedication, Goals, and our Heart.
- 3) And hopefully constrained us to get up from our “bed of ease” to follow Jesus!

III. INSIGHTS FROM THE QUESTIONS:

A. Jesus is not trying to overwhelm us!

- 1) But, neither does He want us to be satisfied with Mediocrity.
- 2) Any goal less than perfection is degrading of the religion of Jesus Christ.

B. Jesus wants us to realize what it means to be a Child of God!

- 1) It does not involve living like an ordinary man.
- 2) But living like God.
 - a) To be unselfish...denying of self.
 - b) To turn the other cheek.
 - c) To return good for evil.
 - d) To suffer wrong instead of seeking revenge.
 - e) To forgive 70 X 7.
- 3) To get the vision that is spiritually greater than other men.
- 4) To have a zeal for God’s righteousness that is expressed in:
 - a) Not being satisfied with yesterday’s accomplishments;
 - b) And pressing on to greater unselfish service to God & man.

CONCLUSION

1. Jesus' question: ***“What do you do more than others?”***
 - a) Was intended to help us with an honest evaluation of ourselves;
 - b) To help us realize the need of “taking up our cross daily and following Him;
 - c) And to cause us to see the need for change in our lives—for the better.
2. Will or have His efforts been effective in our lives?
3. Let's reach out to the challenge!

Lesson Seven

“What Are Three Things Satan Wants to Do?”

(2 Cor. 11:1-15)

INTRODUCTION

1. The Scriptures indicate that the Devil is called:
 - a) Jn. 14:30—***“the ruler (prince) of this world.”***
 - b) Matt. 12:24—***“Beelzebub, the ruler (prince) of demons.”***
 - c) Luke 10:17-18—***“Satan.”***
2. The Scriptures Characterize him as:
 - a) 1 Tim. 3:6—***Guilty of Pride.***
 - b) 1 Jn. 2:13—***“the wicked one.”***
 - c) 2 Cor. 11:3—***Crafty & deceiving.***
3. Mankind is warned about his deceptive ways & to resist him:
 - a) 1 Pet. 5:8-9—***“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walks about, seeking whom he may devour: whom resist steadfast in the faith.”***
 - b) Eph. 6:11—***“Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.”***
4. While he will do much harm—his doom is sure!
 - a) Rev. 20:10—***“And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.”***
5. The devil is not idle—He has at least 3 great desires:

DISCUSSION**I. HE WANTS TO KEEP EVERYONE OUT OF THE LORD’S CHURCH.*****A. The reasons:***

- 1) The saved are in the church:
 - a) Eph. 5:23—***“For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church; and he is the Savior of the body.”***
- 2) Only in the church is there continued forgiveness:
 - a) Acts 20:28—***“Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of the Lord, which he has purchased with his own blood.”***
 - b) 1 Jn. 1:7—***“But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his son cleanses us from all sin.”***
- 3) Jesus is the head of the church:
 - a) Col. 1:18—***“And He is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things He might have the preeminence.”***
 - b) The devil wants the preeminence—not Jesus!
 - c) When one enters the church he is subject to Christ.

B. Ways to keep men out of the church.

- 1) Encourage people to put off obedience until it's too late!
 - a) Heb. 3:7-8—***“Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts...”***
- 2) Make a great deal over hypocrites in the church.
 - a) Hypocrisy is not what God wants of His people.
 - b) Rom. 12:9—***“Let love be without hypocrisy.”***
 - c) Be sure that the devil will spot a hypocrite among God's people.
 - d) Of course, the world is full of such.
- 3) Through deceptive lies:
 - a) Tell false things about the church.
 - b) Say that the church is not essential.
 - c) Build substitutes for the Lord's church.
 - d) Encourage people not to do what the Lord says to do to be saved.

C. The devil has been most effective in keeping people out of the church.**II. TO LURE GOD'S PEOPLE BACK INTO THE WORLD.****A. The Bible warns of this possibility.**

- 1) 1 Jn. 2:15—***“Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him....And the world passes away, and the lust thereof: but he that does the will of God abides forever.”***
- 2) But what about those who will not abide in the will of God?
- 3) 2 Pet. 2:20-22

B. How does the devil get us back into the world?

- 1) He weakens our faith.
 - a) 1 Pet. 1:5—***“Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.”***
- 2) Evil companions.
 - a) 1 Cor. 15:33—***“Be not deceived: evil company corrupts good habits.”***
 - b) They can be effective in drawing us away from Christ.
- 3) Worldly cares.
 - a) We become so involved in worldly cares that we neglect our soul.
- 4) Persecution.
 - a) Mk. 4:16-17—***“And these are they likewise which are sown on stony ground; who, when they have heard the word, immediately receive it with gladness; and have no root in themselves, and so endure but for a time: afterward, when affliction or persecution arises for the word's sake, immediately they are offended.”***
 - b) They tend to give in and go back into the world.

III. RENDER US WORTHLESS TO THE LORD.**A. The devil knows that God's people must bear fruit or be lost.**

- 1) Mk. 4:18-19—***“And these are they which are sown among thorns; such as hear the word, and the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful.”***

- 2) John 15:1-2—***“I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away...”***
- B. The devil’s delight.....Lots of talk, but not to do!***
- 1) He wants us to be satisfied with ourselves.
 - 2) To be indifferent to the church and its mission.
 - 3) To argue, fuss, and create strife.
 - 4) To have our pride or ego satisfied or else we throw our fit.
 - 5) Make excuses for all that we are not doing.
 - 6) To be hypocritical—pretending to be what we are not.
 - 7) Encourage covetousness and stinginess on our part.

CONCLUSION

1. The devil is busy and active to accomplish these three goals.
2. We need to be aware of his devices and prepare for them.
3. Knowledge of the Word of God is a strong weapon against him.
4. How effective has he been in your life and mine?

*Lesson Eight****“What Are Three Levels of Living?”*****(1 Cor. 2:14-3:4)****INTRODUCTION**

1. Over 40+ years ago, we moved from Denton, Texas to New Jersey.
2. One of the things that was different was the housing.
 - a) Instead of single story houses...
 - b) We saw 2 & 3 story houses.
3. One of the advantages of living in an apartment—you can choose which level you want to live on.
4. The same is true spiritually!
 - a) 1 Cor. 2:14-3:4 talks about three levels of living.....
 - b) Natural, Spiritual, Carnal.
 - c) Everyone lives on one of these three levels.

DISCUSSION**I. NATURAL LEVEL.****A. 1 Cor. 2:14**

- 1) Description of the natural man:
 - a) 1 Cor. 1:21—*“For after that in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God...”*
 - b) Rom. 1:21—*“Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened.”*
 - c) Eph. 4:17-18
 - d) Eph. 2:2-3
- 2) Primarily, the natural man has little or no interest in spiritual things.

B. He needs redemption—to be turned back to God.

- 1) Without a spiritual rebirth—he remains a natural man.
- 2) Jesus’ death has made this redemption possible—if men will turn to Him.
- 3) If he continues in sin, he is under the condemnation of God.
- 4) Rom. 2:7-8

II. THE SPIRITUAL LEVEL**A. 1 Cor. 2:15**

- 1) Description of the spiritual person.
 - a) Rom. 6:1-6
 - b) Col. 3:1-3
 - c) 2 Pet. 1:5-10

- d) Rom. 8:5, 6—*“For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit...to be spiritually-minded is life and peace.*

B. The challenge is to remain a spiritual man!

- 1) Requires continual crucifying of the old man of sin.
- 2) And to allow God’s Spirit to take full control of our lives.
- 3) Not to quench the Spirit, Grieve the Spirit, but listen and obey His Will.

III. THE CARNAL LEVEL

A. 1 Cor. 3:1-3

- 1) Description of the carnal person.
 - a) 1 Cor. 1:2; 3:1—Christians, but carnal.
 - b) Carnality seems to be identifying back with the natural man.
- 2) Conflict between the flesh and the Spirit.
 - a) Gal. 5:16-17
 - b) The spiritual man has habitual victory—because he yields to the Spirit.
 - c) The carnal man suffers repeated defeat & failure—because he is unwilling to fully yield to the Spirit.

B. *Identifying the Carnal Christian:*

- 1) Too much interest in pleasures, riches, and the cares of this world.
- 2) Carnality shown by: Contentiousness, quarrelsomeness, jealousy, self-willed, impatient, impure, rebellious.
- 3) He sees very little spiritual growth.
- 4) He is content with milk of the word—can’t bear the meat of the word.
- 5) Cares little about study and learning the deep treasures of God’s Word. (**2 Tim. 4:1-5**)

C. *Solution—Rom. 12:1-2*

CONCLUSION

1. Every human soul is living on one of these levels.
2. The highest and greatest life is the spiritual level.
3. It is the only one that has the promise of everlasting life.
4. May we all be challenged to live on this level!

Lesson Nine

“When Does Duty Become Desire?”

(1 John 5:1-4)

INTRODUCTION

1. Illustration:
 - a) A man approaches a school zone.
 - b) He slows down because:
 - He sees a policeman.
 - He respects the Policeman’s power to fine him for speeding.
 - He doesn’t want a fine.
 - c) The next day he approaches the school zone.
 - He doesn’t see a policeman.
 - He speeds through the area.
 - He almost hit a little girl.
 - He is shaken up.
 - d) The next day he goes through the school zone—What did he do & why?
 - He slows down whether he sees the police or not.
 - Why—his heart has been affected!
2. This is what God wants of His creatures: **Heart Service, not lip service!**
 - a) God wants Sincere, Committed, and Heart obedience.
 - b) Eph. 6:6—*“Not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart.”*
 - c) John 4:24—*“God is a Spirit: and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and in truth.”*
 - d) Ps. 122:1—*“I was glad when they said to me, let us go into the house of the Lord.”*

DISCUSSION**I. JESUS SHOWED CLEARLY THE DIFFERENCE IN HEART SERVICE & LIP SERVICE.*****A. Scriptures:***

- 1) Matt. 23:25—*“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you cleanse the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of extortion and self-indulgence.”*
 - a) Notice the emphasis upon the outward, but not the inside.
 - b) V. 28—*“But inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.”*
- 2) Matt. 15:8—(Jesus quotes from Isaiah 29:13)—*“These people draw near to Me with their mouth, and honor Me with their lips, but their heart is far from me.”*
- 3) Matt. 13:15—(Jesus again quotes from Isaiah 6:10)—*“For the hearts of this people have grown dull. Their ears are hard of hearing, and their eyes they have closed, lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, so that I should heal them.”*

Mark 3:5—*“And when He (Jesus) looked around at them with anger, being grieved by the hardness of their hearts....”*

B. God obviously wants to capture, woo, and win man’s heart.

- 1) He wants heart allegiance, not lip service.
- 2) He wants more than just outward conformity.
- 3) His New Covenant has been purposely *“written & engraven on the heart.”* (Heb. 8:10)
- 4) God wants man’s obedience:
 - a) Not just out of terror & dread of His threatened wrath & punishment.
 - b) But...because we love Him for what he has done.
 - c) And because we desire to please our Maker!

C. Scriptures that express this thought:

- 1) Matt. 22:37—*“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.”*
- 2) Acts 11:23—*“When he (Barnabas) came and had seen the grace of God, he was glad, and encouraged them all that with purpose of heart they should continue with the Lord.”*
- 3) Rom. 6:17—*“But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered.”*

II. WHAT CAN HELP ASSURE OUR SERVICE TO GOD TO BE FROM THE HEART?

A. We need to be sure that our wants correspond to God’s wants.

- 1) Matt. 6:21—*“Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.”*
- 2) Someone has observed:
 - a) *“The way to be happy is to keep your wants few and simple.”*
 - b) Obviously—there is less pressure to secure things.
 - c) And there is less disappointment in life in not getting things.
- 3) But we believe that real happiness is to make our wants correspond to God’s wants.
 - a) If we made a list of our wants and desires.....
 - b) And then, made a list of what God wants....
 - c) How close would they correspond???
- 4) Jesus was a perfect example of this concept.
 - a) Everything he did was because He believed it to be God’s will.
 - b) Heb. 10:9—*“Lo, I come to do thy will O God.”*
 - c) John 6:38—*“For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him that sent me.”*
 - d) In the face of death, He said: *“Not my will, but thine be done.”*

B. By engaging in those activities designed to increase my love for God.

- 1) To truly know God is to love Him.
 - a) John 17:3—*“And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.”*
 - b) We need to fully come to know God’s nature & attributes.
 - c) 2 Pet. 3:18—*“But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”*

- d) Why?....to know Him is to love Him!
- 2) The better we know God—the more likely our service will be from the heart.
- 3) We need to spend time in worship to God with His people.
 - a) God has purposely designed that His people come together for worship!
 - b) Because worship is a way of expressing respect & love to God.
 - c) The more we worship sincerely—the greater our love for God.
 - d) Unless we let it become an outward form only!
- 4) If I go away from worship unsatisfied—not built up:
 - a) Do I like that?
 - b) Is this what worship is all about?
- 5) Which is more desirable:
 - a) To worship God from the heart;
 - b) Or, to just go through some forms, activities, without real meaning?
- 6) Which is better:
 - a) To do God’s Will because I have to;
 - b) Or, because I want to and enjoy it?

CONCLUSION

1. Illustration:
 - a) R
 - b) I ran across a story about Abraham Lincoln.
 - c) During the Civil War:
 - He would occasionally visit hospitals to cheer up wounded soldiers.
 - One day, he came to the bed of a young soldier who was near death.
 - He asked the young man, *“Is there anything I can do for you?”*
 - The young man did not know it was the President.
 - He answered, *“Yes, there is. Would you please write a letter to my mother?”*
 - Mr. Lincoln wrote as the young man dictated.
 - d) The letter—*“Dearest Mom, I was badly hurt while doing my duty, and I’ll not recover. Don’t sorrow too much for me. May God bless you and father. Please kiss Mary and John for me.”*
 - e) At this point, the young soldier grew so weary that he could not finish dictating the letter or sign his name.
 - Mr. Lincoln finished the letter.
 - *“Written for your son at his request by Abraham Lincoln.”*
 - f) Just as Mr. Lincoln was about ready to seal the letter, the young man recovered enough to want to read the letter.
 - g) When he got to the bottom of the letter, he was shocked. *“Are you really President Lincoln?”*
 - h) The President smiled and said, *“Yes, I am. Is there anything more I can do for you?”*
 - i) The young soldier made one last request, *“Mr. President, would you mind holding my hand and seeing me through to the end?”*
 - j) He stayed with the young man until he drew his last breath!
2. Mr. Lincoln was a great man with a great heart.
 - a) He served the people—not out of a sense of duty only—but from his heart.
3. When we serve God from the heart—it becomes genuine obedience to God.

4. 1 John 5:3—***“For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not grievous.”***
5. Why waste our time on lip service—we have everything to lose by doing so.
6. Our challenge:
 - a) To work to make duty to become desire in serving God.
 - b) To work to put our whole heart into our service to God.

Lesson Ten

“Should Christians be Tolerate of Others?”

(2 Tim. 2:19-26)

INTRODUCTION

1. To be tolerant of others and their beliefs can be a challenge!
2. To be tolerant and try to correct or teach others can also be a challenge!
3. The Lord is saying through the apostle Paul:
 - a) We are to try to correct and teach others;
 - b) So they may come to know God’s truth;
 - c) So they may escape the snare of the devil.
4. Can we be tolerant of others and do this?
5. I know that some people just cannot tolerate those who differ with them.
6. While others seem to be able to tolerate anyone and anything.
7. Questions:
 - a) Should Christians be tolerant of others?
 - b) If so, how tolerant should we be of them and their lives?
 - c) What should be our attitudes and actions towards them?
 - d) Can toleration be misused to do wrong?

DISCUSSION**I. HOW WOULD YOU DEFINE TOLERATION?****A. 20th Century Dictionary:**

- 1) *“The disposition to be patient and indulgent toward those whose opinions or practices differ from one’s own.”*
- 2) *“Freedom from bigotry or severity in judging the opinions or conduct of others.”*
- 3) *“Forbearance, sufferance, allowance by a government of the exercise of religions other than the religion which is officially established or recognized.”*

B. Illustration:

- 1) In 1689, an effort was made to have accepted as law the “Act of Toleration.”
- 2) This act legally recognized just one church.
- 3) But it also permitted, under specific restrictions, the existence of dissenting religious bodies.

C. The idea was:

- 1) To treat with respect those who hold views different from myself.
- 2) The word comes from Latin, which means: *“to endure.”*

D. Things often involved in the concept of toleration:

- 1) That those to whom tolerance is extended are considered to be wrong.
- 2) It’s intent is to recognize people’s rights to differ from one another.
- 3) It encourages us to respect them in spite of our differences.
- 4) Especially, not to do harm in spite of what they hold to—even when I consider them wrong.

II. SOME MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT TOLERANCE.

- A. *“If you are tolerant, you cannot have convictions.”*

- 1) Wrong!
 - 2) That is the whole idea of tolerance:
 - a) You believe you are right!
 - b) But you will allow the other person the right to believe what they want to.
 - 3) It is to allow others to disagree with you without becoming disagreeable.
- B. “If you are tolerant, you have to be indifferent to Truth.”**
- 1) Wrong!
 - 2) Toleration involves believing you have the Truth, and others do not.
 - 3) Not to believe in Truth is disastrous! (John 8:32)
 - 4) Being tolerant of what others believe should not cause me to be indifferent to Truth.
 - 5) I should believe and obey it to be right with God. (2 Jn. 9)
 - 6) And I should also attempt to correct or teach others that Truth.
- C. “If you are tolerant, you must allow false doctrine to be preached in your midst.”**
- 1) Wrong again!
 - 2) Some insist that we must allow open advocating of:
 - a) Fornication, Adultery, Homosexuality
 - b) Pornography, Immodesty, Impurities of all kinds, etc.
 - 3) It is one thing to recognize a man’s right to hold to these views!
 - 4) But it is quite another to allow him to openly teach & practice such without giving opposition to such.
 - a) God’s Word is very clear & strong on these matters. (Gal. 5:19-21)
 - b) Tit. 1:9-11
 - 5) But—the attitude with which God’s Truth is upheld is also important!
 - a) 2 Tim. 2:24-25
 - b) 2 Thess. 3:15
 - c) I can be intolerant of erroneous ideas, but tolerant of the person who believes them.

III. WHAT DOES TOLERANCE ALLOW?

- A. To hold uncompromisingly to the Truth of God.**
- 1) I can honestly, sincerely believe something to be wrong.
 - 2) But be tolerant towards those who disagree with me.
 - 3) I can pursue truth with great zeal, but not abuse people in my efforts.
 - 4) We are commanded by God to, “**Hold fast the form of sound words...**”(2 Tim. 1:13)
- B. I can engage in an active effort to change people’s thinking.**
- 1) Tolerance is not softness or weakness.
 - a) I can respect the rights of people, while disagreeing sincerely.
 - b) I can even strive to convert them to what I believe is truth.
 - c) But it must be done in the right spirit....”**Speak truth in Love.**” (Eph. 4:15).
 - 2) The main purpose of preaching is to change people’s thinking!
 - a) It should be done with respect for people.
 - b) In kindness, gentleness, and love. (2 Tim. 2:24-25)

- c) Not to attempt to use force, coercion, or under-handed tactics.
 - d) 1 Thess. 2:4-8
 - 3) Christ & the apostles opposed error or evil.
 - a) Jesus drove the money-changers out of the Temple.
 - b) He exposed & condemned false teachers.
 - c) He taught that there was only one way to God. (Jn. 14:6)
 - d) Peter charged the Jews with crucifying Christ.
 - e) Were Jesus & Peter intolerant?
- C. I am not forbidden to oppose evil.***
- 1) We must seek for truth and hold to it.
 - a) Prov. 23:3—***“Buy the truth, and sell it not...”***
 - 2) All men are to turn from evil, but to oppose it as well.
 - 3) 2 Tim. 4:1-4
 - 4) But such is not to be done:
 - a) In ridicule of the person;
 - b) Misrepresentation or lies
 - 5) But rather by truth, kindness, and love.

CONCLUSION

- 1. Toleration is not weakness, but great strength.
 - a) It requires a mature, loving, kind, gentle person to show it correctly.
 - b) It is only shown by people who have strong convictions about truth & right.
- 2. Jesus exemplified the perfect tolerance & kindness while being crucified:
 - a) They reviled Him...he did not revile back.
 - b) They mistreated him...he did not mistreat them back.
 - c) They nailed him to the cross...he prayed for them: ***“Father, forgive them..”***
 - d) And yet—he never compromised His teachings all the way through!
 - e) And they knew it!
- 3. Do we show tolerance towards those with whom we disagree?

Lesson Eleven

“Is Christianity Worth the Price?”

(Matt. 19:23-30)

INTRODUCTION

1. The Lord characterized his true followers with these words:
 - a) Matt. 16:24—**“Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.”**
 - b) Matt. 19:29—**“And every one that hath forsaken houses or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name’s sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life.”**
2. When you look at what it cost to be a Christian, a follower of Christ....do these questions come to your mind?
 - a) Does the Lord expect too much?
 - b) Is the price too high?
 - c) Is it worth it to be a Christian?
 - d) Can I get in on a cut-rate price?
3. Let’s look closer at the price that Jesus wants us to pay to be His followers.

DISCUSSION**I. IN AN AGE OF IMMORALITY, AM I WILLING TO STAND FOR MORAL TRUTH?*****A. Fornication or Sexual indulgence has become common in our society.***

- 1) Sexual pleasure is the “god” before whose shrine many worship.
- 2) Anything is alright in the name of “love” (which is really “lust”).
- 3) But Jesus requires His followers to:
 - a) (1 Cor. 6:18) **“Flee fornication.”**
 - b) (1 Thess. 4:3) **“Abstain from fornication.”**
 - c) (Rev. 21:8) **“Fornicators will have their part in the lake of fire.”**
- 5) Is it worth the price to follow Christ..... to be a Christian?

B. Immodest dress has become more common in our society.

- 1) Our society exploits men & women who will:
 - a) Dress immodesty
 - b) Or, take their clothes off before all.
- 2) The world sets the pace in immodest fashions, and many professed Christians follow the standards of the world, rather than Christ’s teachings.
- 3) 1 Tim. 2:9-10—**“In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with braided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; but (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works.”**
- 4) But it is often easier to conform than to be different!
- 5) Is it worth the price to follow Christ...to be a Christian?

II. IN AN AGE OF UNDISCIPLINED CHILDREN, AM I WILLING TO DISCIPLINE ?

A. Parents had rather listen to Psychologists & Educators, than God.

- 1) Our Nation is more & more reaping the harvest of such.
- 2) But Christian parents often get caught up in the same mistakes.
 - a) They too fail to listen to God’s instructions.
 - b) Instead of following Christ, they are following the world.
 - c) And disaster spiritually is the results.
- 4) Illustration:
 - a) While in Ghana, W. Africa, saw a pitiable sight.
 - b) Man with crumpled & twisted feet under him.
 - c) Had to walk on hands or on a skate board.
 - d) I wondered at the sight....”What horrible disease caused this?”
 - e) To my surprise....NONE!
 - f) Parents had tied the infant’s legs in knots, breaking & twisting them.
 - g) They forced them to be like this.
 - h) Why? So he could beg for money!
 - i) “How horrible,” you say!
- 5) If we fail in our job....our children will be deformed spiritually!
 - a) (Prov. 22:6) ***“Train up a Child in the way he should go...”***
 - b) (Prov. 13:24) ***“He that spares his rod hates his son; but he that loves him chastens him betimes.”***
 - c) (Eph. 6:4) ***“Bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.”***
- 6) Is it worth the price to follow Christ, rather than the world?

III. IN AN AGE OF DENIAL OF THE BASIC TEACHINGS OF CHRIST, AM I WILLING TO STAND STEADFAST IN HIS WORD?

A. The Bible is no longer the Authoritative Word of God to many who profess to be Christians.

- 1) Words of Atheistic Scientists have replaced the Words of Christ.
- 2) Compromising, liberal teachings of Theologians have become more desirable to believe than the teachings of Christ.
- 3) The sectarian, denominational approach to Christianity is preferred by professed Christians, rather than the oneness for which Christ earnestly prayed. (John 17)
- 4) Christ calls upon His followers to:
 - a) 2 John 9---***“Abide in the doctrine (teaching) of Christ.”***
 - b) Matt. 7:21---That those who will enter the kingdom of heaven are those who ***“Keep God’s commandments.”***
 - c) 1 Cor. 1:10---That all his followers are to ***“speak the same thing.”***
- 5) Christ gave the prescription for that oneness in Eph. 4:4-6:
 - a) ***“There is one body”*** (one church)
 - b) ***“There is one Spirit”*** (who has given us His Word)
 - c) ***“There is one hope”*** (the hope of heaven someday)
 - d) ***“There is one Lord”*** (Jesus is Lord....King... Authority)

- e) **“There is one faith”** (one system of beliefs to be held to)
- f) **“There is one baptism”** (immersion in water in order to receive forgiven of our sins)
- g) **“There is one God”** (Who is the Father in heaven).

B. Followers of Christ are commanded to: “Stand fast, and hold the traditions which you have been taught.” (2 Thess. 2:15)

- 1) The choice has to be made....which we will believe and follow.
- 2) Is it worth the cost to follow Christ, and take a stand for truth & righteousness?

IV. IN AN AGE OF SELFISHNESS, AM I WILLING TO BE A GOOD STEWARD OF ALL GOD BLESSES ME WITH!

A. The emphasis in our society is: “Me,” “I,” “Mine,” “What I like,” “What I want,” etc.

- 1) Everything is to be designed to satisfy my wants.
- 2) Are we like the rich farmer Jesus spoke about in Luke 12:13ff.
 - a) He harvested a great crop.
 - b) He pondered what to do with it.
 - c) He would build greater storage facilities to store it up.
 - d) And then he said, **“Soul, you hast much goods laid up for many years; take your ease, eat, drink, and be merry.”**
- 3) But Jesus ended the story by calling the man a “Fool.”
 - a) **“You fool, this night your soul shall be required of you: then whose shall those things be, which you have provided? So is he that lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.”**
 - b) His foolishness was seen in his selfishness!
 - c) He did not use his blessings wisely to be rich toward God!
- 4) To be a follower of Christ, We must:
 - a) 1 Cor. 4:2---**“be found faithful”** as God’s stewards.
 - b) 1 Tim. 6:10---We must not **“Love money”** for such is the root of all kinds of evil.
 - c) Matt. 6:20---We must **“Lay up treasures in heaven”** by being unselfish with what we have been entrusted.
 - d) To use these possessions to further the kingdom of God!
- 5) Illustration:
 - a) Two business men visited Korea.
 - b) They were religious & met for worship on Sunday.
 - c) They had seen a family working in a field near by the day before.
 - A boy was pulling the plow.
 - The father was steering the plow.
 - d) They remarked, **“They must be very poor.”**
 - e) **“Yes, they are.”**
 - f) **“The reason they do not have an ox to pull the plow is.... The church needed a meeting house, so they sold their ox and gave the money.”**

- g) One of the men remarked: *“That was a stupendous sacrifice, why did you let them do such?”*
- g) Reply: *“They did not feel that way....they regarded it as a great privilege that they had an ox to give.”*
- 6) Jesus makes it clear that His followers will give an accounting of their stewardship in the Day of Judgment.
- 7) Is it worth the price to be a good steward of Christ, rather than follow the example of the rich fool?

V. IN AN AGE WHERE MEN TRY TO CONQUER OTHERS, AM I WILLING TO LEARN TO CONQUER MYSELF!

A. We are in a competitive society & a competitive world.....each trying to outdo or be the greater of the two.

- 1) We have probably all seen cowboys out west:
 - a) Get on a wild horse & ride it to a stand-still.
 - b) This requires courage & skill.
 - c) And it can be dangerous to one’s health.
 - d) But when done...he has only conquered an animal.
- 2) Many of us have seen men in a boxing ring:
 - a) The punishment can be bad at times.
 - b) They go at it until one gets defeated.
 - c) This requires courage & skill also.
 - d) And it can be dangerous too....some have been killed or maimed for life.
 - e) But when done...he has only conquered another man.
- 3) We have seen PEOPLE in competitive games of all kinds.
 - a) But when they have finished their games.....
 - b) They have only conquered another person or another team.

B. Jesus calls us to conquer the greatest obstacle.....SELF!

- 1) Matt. 16:24—***“If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.”***
- 2) We must bring ourselves under Jesus’ control.
- 3) How many have seen this scene:
 - a) People with heads bowed, tears of repentance flowing.
 - b) They have been cut to the heart by the Gospel message.
 - c) They have realized the terribleness of their sinful disobedience to a Loving God.
 - d) They cry out....***“What must we do to be saved?”***
- 4) These have started the road to conquering themselves....Letting God take control of their lives!
- 5) The price must be paid, if we are to be acceptable to God.

CONCLUSION

1. Illustration:

- a) Man went shopping in store.
- b) Saw price on the item he wanted...98 cents.

- c) He erased the price & wrote 49 cents.
 - d) He did this on several items.
 - e) When he checked out....it was obvious what he had done.
 - f) The checker said: *"I'm sorry we priced these items too high for you, I hope the price you have marked suits you better."*
2. Did you say...."That would never happen!"
 3. But don't people attempt to do the same thing spiritually?
 - a) Instead of teaching people to obey God's Will to be saved....they want to get people saved without obedience.
 - b) Instead of faithful attendance to worship & Bible study....they want irregular attendance to be acceptable.
 - c) Instead of liberal giving....they want stingy giving to be acceptable.
 - d) Instead of abounding in the work of the Lord...they want to do as little as possible and be accepted.
 4. And then in judgment day, we want to hear God say:
"I'm sorry that I made the requirements of heaven too high for you. What you have done suits me perfectly, pass right on through the gates, heaven is yours."
 5. Do we really think that God will let us set our own price?
 6. Jesus has given no indication of cutting the price for anyone.
 7. The price stands....are we willing to pay the cost?

Lesson Twelve

“How Well Do You Preach?”

(Colossians 1:23-29)

INTRODUCTION

1. Paul said concerning the gospel:
 - a) It gives hope to man.
 - b) It is to be preached to the whole creation.
 - c) He was called by God to preach it to the Gentiles.
2. Paul said that the preaching of this gospel would involve:
 - a) A warning to every man;
 - b) A teaching of every man in all wisdom;
3. The result of preaching this gospel:
 - a) Be able to present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.
4. Paul stated that he strove to do these things in his preaching!
5. When we evaluate the condition of our world:
 - a) It is easy to see their need of the gospel.
 - b) The gospel is the only thing that can effectively change people’s lives to make them acceptable to God.
 - c) Rom. 1:16
 - d) This Gospel needs to be correctly & effectively preached to the world.

DISCUSSION**I. THIS PREACHING MUST BE:****A. Sound, spiritually healthy for the soul!**

- 1) Tit. 2:1—*“But speak thou the things which become sound doctrine”*
- 2) I Thess. 2:4—*“But as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak; not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts.”*
- 3) 2 John 9—*“Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son.”*
- 4) It is a gospel that reproves, rebukes, exhorts, and instructs. (2 Tim. 4:1-2)

B. With Sincerity.

- 1) 1 Thess. 2:3, 5—*“For our exhortation did not come from error or uncleanness, nor was it in deceit....For neither at any time did we use flattering words, as you know, nor a cloak for covetousness—God is witness.”*
- 2) The sincerity of the one teaching needs to come through to hearer.

C. With meekness or gentleness.

- 1) 1 Thess. 2:7—*“But we were gentle among you, just as a nursing mother cherisheth her own children.”*
- 2) 2 Tim. 2:25—*“In humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth.”*
- 3) Not one who runs roughshod over a person, but gently teaches and persuades them to do God's Will—save their souls.

D. With Authority.

- 1) Tit. 2:15—*"These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority."*
- 2) No compromise of truth for anyone.
- 3) It is God's Word—His authority is behind the message.

E. With love.

- 1) Phil. 1:15-17—*"Some indeed preach Christ even from envy and strife, and some also from goodwill: The former preach Christ from selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my chains; but the latter out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the defense of the gospel."*
- 2) Eph. 4:15—The church is to *"Speak the truth in love."*
- 3) Uncompromising truth spoken in a spirit of concern for lost souls.

F. Accompanied by a godly life.

- 1) Not only show concern for those taught—by teaching truth.
- 2) But strive to serve as an example of how people ought to act & live.
- 3) 1 Tim. 4:12, 16—*"Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity..... Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you."*

G. Every preacher ought to be concerned about how he measures up.**II. BUT TO THE OTHER SIDE OF THE COIN—PREACHING MUST BE UPHELD!****A. Illustration:**

- 1) A young woman had just gotten a new job.
- 2) It was her first day of work as a waitress—she was nervous.
- 3) Somehow, she mixed up the order for a young couple.
- 4) The young man:
 - a) Lost his cool;
 - b) Sternly reprimanded her;
 - c) And threatened to complain to the management.
- 5) She went into the back room sobbing.
- 6) The young man was technically correct.
 - a) If she is going to get paid.....
 - b) She needs to do the work correctly.
- 7) At the end of the meal—he left a tip of one cent.
 - a) He knew she would remember him next time.
 - b) And she would give better service.
- 8) After they got back home:
 - a) They went on a Bible Study to a couple they had not met.
 - b) One of the members had set it up with a new family in town.
 - c) They knocked on the door—the husband came to answer it.
 - d) He escorted them into the den to introduce them to his wife.
 - e) He stated that she had had a difficult day at work.
 - f) It was her first day and some uncaring customer totally humiliated her.

- 9) To their surprise, he was the uncaring customer.
 - 10) As they walked out the door—the question was asked—"Was it worth it?"
- B. *The Word of God exhorts us all to Act Correctly because:***
- 1) We are all preachers in a special sense.
 - 2) We preach every day of our lives.
 - 3) Acts 2:47—***"Praising God, and having favor with all the people..."***
 - 4) We are preaching by our words, our looks, our deeds, and our acts.
 - 5) We preach by even what we fail to do.
 - 6) 1 Thess. 2:12—***"That you would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory."***
 - 7) Phil. 1:27—***"Only let your behavior be as it becometh the gospel of Christ."***
 - 8) Phil. 2:14-16—***"Do all things without complaining and disputing, that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast the word of life, so that I may rejoice in the day of Christ that I have not run in vain or labored in vain."***
- C. *It is greatly important that our preaching agree with one another!***
- 1) The same message from the pulpit, must be preached in the pew.
 - 2) It is only when these are in harmony that the most good will come.
 - 3) The preaching from the pulpit will be either:
 - a) Reinforced;
 - b) Or, cancelled out by the kind of preaching done in the pew.
 - 4) However, in many instances:
 - a) The only kind of preaching the world will hear is our lives.
 - b) And...they can be influenced one way or another by it.
- D. *May we stress—Preaching from the pew is important!***
- 1) We may preach strongly in the pulpit:
 - a) Against sin & immorality;
 - b) Against unfaithfulness in marriage;
 - c) Against fornication as immorality—sin;
 - d) Against lying, stealing, dishonesty, bad language, etc.—all condemned!
 - e) Against immodesty in actions & dress—Sin!
 - 2) But, these sermons from the pulpit can quickly be invalidated by a member who doesn't preach the same by his life.
 - 3) And still further:
 - a) The world may never hear these sermons from the pulpit.
 - b) But, your sermon may be all they will hear.
 - c) They will possibly form their conclusions by what they see and hear from you.
 - 4) What value is a sermon against:
 - a) Lying, Cheating, Stealing—if the lives of Christians preach something different?
 - b) What value is a sermon against immodesty:
 - When the world sees Christians immodesty clad in public;
 - Especially in worship assemblies!
 - c) What value is a sermon on Faithfulness—if half the church is not faithful?

E. When the world compares differences in preaching (Pulpit & Pew):

- 1) They are tempted to cry "Hypocrisy!"—And they are right!
- 2) We must work hard to bring both into conformity!

F. When the world looks at your preaching—do they see:

- 1) The importance of faithful attendance to worship & Bible study?
- 2) The grave concern over sin and its dangers?
- 3) That Jesus should be Lord and Master of our lives?
- 4) That only complete submission & obedience to God is what pleases Him?

CONCLUSION

1. Preachers are kidded a lot about their preaching.
 - a) About how long the sermon was.
 - b) About how it puts people to sleep.
 - c) About his meddling when a sermon hits home.
 - d) Hopefully, all in good humor—and not belittling the Word of God.
2. But seriously:
 - a) The Pew does want a preacher to evaluate his preaching as well as his life
 - b) For both are important.
3. And seriously:
 - a) Can we not see the need for the Pew honestly evaluating their preaching as well.
 - b) Just how well do you preach?
 - c) Are you satisfied and happy with your preaching?
 - d) Does your preaching please & glorify God?
 - e) Will sinners be convicted by your preaching?
 - f) Does your preaching agree with the preaching in the pulpit?
 - g) Just how well do you preach?
4. Sinner friend—your life is also preaching:
 - a) That disbelief & disobedience is the correct thing to do;
 - b) That putting off obedience to God is the right thing to do.
5. Is that what you want your family & friends to hear?

Lesson Thirteen

“How Important is All the Teaching of Christ?”

(Matthew 23:23-26)

INTRODUCTION

1. We occasionally hear people talking or read their writings that seem to be saying:
 - a) There is a core gospel that needs to be stressed.....
 - b) But the rest of the Bible is not all that important.
2. Questions:
 - a) Is there a core gospel that people need to believe & obey to be saved?
 - b) Is that all we need—we don't need to be concern about the rest?
 - c) Or, can we understand that there are core matters.....
 - d) But at the same time—there are other teachings that are also just as important?
3. If you have not come face to face with these questions, it may be good for you to think these issues through because:
 - a) It is advocated not only in the religious world;
 - b) But as well by some preachers in the Lord's church.
4. QUESTIONS:
 - a) Do we have to choose between the two?
 - b) Is it an either/or proposition?
 - c) Or is it a both proposition?
5. I think that all would logically admit that there are central teachings that are vital
 - a) But are not all the teachings of the Bible important?
 - b) Can we ignore the non-core teachings and be pleasing to God?
6. Where did this idea of a “core-gospel” come from?
 - a) Is the term found in Scripture? Obviously not!
 - b) Is the concept found in Scripture? I believe so!
7. Illustrations:
 - a) An apple has a core that contains seeds.
 - b) The core is important to the reproducing of Apples.
 - c) The skin and meaty part is not important to the reproducing of Apples.
 - d) If you use this as an illustration of the Core Gospel.....then, everything else is not important.
 - e) But what is the point of even having an Apple...the core or the part we eat?
 - f) The answer is obvious....It is designed for food to eat, while the core has its purpose to reproduce the apple.
 - g) So...all the apple is important!
 - h) But the core is more basic to the continued existence of the apple.

DISCUSSION

I. DOES THE BIBLE TEACH THAT SOME THINGS ARE MORE IMPORTANT THAN OTHERS?

A. Matthew 23:23

- 1) This is primarily talking about the Old Testament—but in principle it could also be about the New Testament.

- 2) You cannot have “weightier matters” without having “weighty matters.”
- 3) Tithing was a weighty matter, but not the weightier matter.
- 4) Justice, Mercy, and Faith are weightier matters.
- 5) But he specifically said, you must not neglect giving....it must be important.

B. 1 Corinthians 13:13

- 1) Faith, Hope, and Love are listed as being great!
- 2) But love is the greatest!
- 3) You can have great, greater, and greatest.
- 4) He said that love was the greatest of these three.
- 5) Who would dare say that Faith and Hope are not important?
- 6) Why would love be the greatest?
 - a) Vs. 1-3 says that Unless our actions are motivated by love, they are worthless.
 - b) God is not faith nor hope, but He is Love.
 - c) Faith and Hope will end at Judgment, but love is eternal.
 - d) “Love is the fulfilling of the Law of God.”
- 7) But love as such is not mentioned in Matt. 23:23 as one of the weightier matters!

C. 1 Corinthians 2:2

- 1) Does this mean that all Paul preached was the crucifixion of Christ?
- 2) If so, why did he spend the majority of his letter to correct so many problems in the Corinthian Church?
 - a) Carnality—divisiveness
 - b) Immorality
 - c) Lack of love for brethren
 - d) Wrong worship
 - e) Wrong understanding about future resurrection
 - f) etc.
- 3) Why spend all that effort on unimportant things—IF THEY ARE UNIMPORTANT!
- 4) Certainly, the preaching of Christ crucified is basic to the saving of men.
- 5) Without it—nothing else matters.
- 6) But that doesn’t mean that everything else taught in Scripture is unimportant.
- 7) 2 Tim. 3:16-17
- 8) 2 Peter 1:3, 5-11
- 9) 2 John 9

D. John 17:20-21

- 1) Who would dare say that Unity (oneness) is not important?
- 2) There may be more basic things that are necessary in order to have unity, but unity is:
 - a) Very vital to the body of Christ;
 - b) And to Christ, Himself!

E. 1 Corinthians 6:18-20

- 1) Who would dare say that immoral actions are not a concern for Christians?
- 2) God commands us to flee such!

- a) It defiles the Temple of God.
- b) We are to glorify God in our body and spirit.
- 3) Rom. 6:1-2, 6
- 4) Living a godly life is important for many reasons!
- 5) It may not be as basic as some other things, but it is very important.

F. Titus 3:11-12

- 1) Grace is not mentioned, as such by name, in Matt. 23:23.
- 2) Yet, who would deny its importance to man's eternal salvation?
- 3) Yes, there are weightier matters that we need to be concerned about because they are primary or basic.
- 4) But that does not taken away the importance of the rest of NT teachings.

II. SPECIAL PASSAGES

A. John 6:26-27

- 1) These passages are the "Don't do, But" passages.
- 2) It is a way of putting stress on the more important thing—Spiritual Bread.
- 3) But working for our living is important too. (1 Tim. 5:8)

B. 1 Corinthians 1:17

- 1) Which is basic—Preaching the Gospel or baptizing?
- 2) Without the preaching, no need for baptism!
- 3) Put the emphasis on the right thing and the other falls into its place.
- 4) Is he saying that baptism is unimportant?
- 5) Of course not!
- 6) He, himself was baptized.....Acts 22:16.
- 7) And he baptized those who believed the preaching.

C. Matthew 6:33

- 1) What is more important than food and clothing?
- 2) Seeking first the kingdom of God!
- 3) Jesus is not saying that working for a living is unimportant.
- 4) It is secondary—not the most important.

D. Matthew 16:26

- 1) Which is the more important—our soul's salvation or gaining the world?
- 2) The answer is obvious.
- 3) Does that mean we shouldn't work to gain what we need to survive?
- 4) Certainly not.
- 5) But saving our soul is much more important.

CONCLUSION

- 1. There are some things that are very basic upon which the rest of the Bible depends.
- 2. Becoming a Christian is vital!
 - a) You can live as good a life as possible.....And still be lost!
 - c) Why?
 - 1) Because justification is not by our own works of merit.
 - 2) We are justified by Grace through Faith..... We need Christ!
 - 3) An obedient faith.
- 3. But, we also have to continue to be obedient to God to be saved eternally.
 - a) Heb. 5:8-9; I Jn. 1:7; 2 John 9
 - b) There is no need to live a good life unless we are willing to become a child of God.

