

Great Verses



of the New Testament

Forum Terrace Church of Christ
Sunday Morning Young Adult Class, Winter Quarter 2026

A WORKBOOK BY DANIEL R. VESS

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Golden Rule

Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets. – Matthew 7:12

Verse twelve is called the “Golden Rule” and has been one of the most revered statements of Jesus. H. Elligsen wrote, “if the Golden Rule were perfectly obeyed by all there would be: truthfulness in every conversation; honesty in every business deal; faithfulness in every domestic relation; loyalty in the heart of every citizen; tolerance among every party and creed; and peace between every nation.” What a utopian world it would be if this were the case. Jesus wanted this rule to be a part of the righteous standard of His Kingdom. Keep in mind “this statement is not the sum total of Christian truth, nor is it God’s plan of redemption. We should no more build our theology on the Golden Rule than we should build our astronomy on ‘Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star’” (Wiersbe 30).

► **Demands Focusing on the Context**

What is the “therefore” there for? The use of “*therefore*” to introduce this precept is a major objective of this lesson. This verse is often lifted out of context as if it were a separate instruction. Jesus uttered the Golden Rule to summarize the sermon from 5:20 to 7:11. A true understanding of it must originate from within the context of this sermon. Thus it becomes an underlying principle of the moral commands given in the first part of the Sermon on the Mount.

The Golden Rule sums up the positive approach to the negative commands given by Jesus to correct the abuses of the Law. Verbal murder (5:21-26) is to be countered by reconciliation with others. Making half-hearted vows is to be replaced with speaking the truth (5:38-42). Loving everyone, including our oft-hated enemies, is commanded (5:43-48). Instead of hypocritical judgment of others, we are to look to self before correcting another. All of this is motivated by the Golden Rule (7:1-5).

► **Demands Fulfillment of the Law and the Prophets**

Jesus said, “*Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfil*” (Matt. 5:17). The Golden Rule fulfills the Law and the prophets. So, Matthew 5:17 with 7:12 is an inclusio showing that everything in between these two verses are in harmonious context with the principle of fulfilling the Law.

Again, the purpose of the message on the mount was not to destroy the Law and the Prophets but to fulfill them. This Golden Rule when practiced fulfills the Law and the Prophets. There are Old Testament passages which support or parallel the Golden Rule. “*If you meet your enemy’s ox or his donkey going astray, you shall surely bring it back to him again. If you see the donkey of one who hates you lying under its burden, and you would refrain from helping it, you shall surely help him with it*” (Ex. 23:4-5). “*You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the Lord*” (Lev. 19:18). The Golden Rule fulfilled the law and the prophets, at least in the matter of neighbor-love.

Actions which fulfill the Law of God are found throughout the New Testament. Concerning the two greatest commandments (loving God and one’s neighbor) Jesus said, “*On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets*” (Matt. 22:40). The apostle Paul mentions the fulfillment of the Law by loving behavior toward others. “*Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law*” (Rom. 13:8). “*Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law*” (Rom. 13:10). “*For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: ‘You*

shall love your neighbor as yourself (Gal. 5:14). *"Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ"* (Gal. 6:2).

► **Demands Examining Self**

Selfishness is one of the major sources of problems with relationships between God and one's fellow-man. Someone who loves themselves in an improper way is filled with self-interest, self-centeredness, and is self-serving. The Iron Rule (that is, might makes right" or "he who has the Gold makes the rules") also called the Law of the Jungle rules in the world of men. Leroy Lawson wrote, "...in a little village in Africa, an anthropologist trying to learn about the people asked a native the difference between good and evil. It was all very simple, he discovered. Evil is when somebody steals my wife and cattle; good is when I steal somebody else's wife and cattle. The law of the jungle - and of most of human society. Do unto others before they do it unto you" (Matthew 109). This is the practice of gangs and criminals. If you can take their money and their life while you keep yours, you are on top. It is also a part of the dog eat dog business world. This philosophy of life is based on the old "might makes right." The Iron Rule is: "do unto other before they do it unto you." If a person has the ability to steal a car and not get caught, he should do it.

Philips translated this verse as "Treat people so that they will treat you well." The Golden Rule is not like the sayings: "You scratch my back and I'll scratch yours" or "You get what you give." Matthew 7:12 reads *"whatever you want men to do to you"* and does not mean "in order that they might." This makes the Golden Rule a matter of manipulating others.

Self-denial is when we learn to love the Lord more than anyone or anything else (Lk. 14:25-33). Love for God comes first according to Jesus, *"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind."* This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: *'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'* On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets" (Matt. 22:36-40).

James refers to the "royal law" which is a restatement of Leviticus 19:18. *"If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself,' you do well"* (Js. 2:8). This presupposes a proper love for self. Someone who hates himself and is suicidal is more likely to hate and harm others. Self-love is a powerful force. It would keep one from harming themselves and thus by application of the Golden Rule keep them from harming anyone else.

This law appeals to our common sense. Most people know how they want to be treated. The rule is easy to apply, because it is based on understanding others' needs from our own understanding of what is the right thing for others to do to us. Often in our interactions we wonder: What is the right thing to do? Just use your imagination and put yourself in their shoes. Thus, the Golden Rule makes the giving of endless detailed instructions and commands unnecessary.

There is an innate sense of right and wrong in man which was put there by the Creator. Even an atheist who does not believe in any absolute moral standards will tell a person not to hit him in the face. Putting oneself in another's shoes is essential to understanding how they might want to be treated. This is not to say that every thing that pleases you will please them. Ask them, "how would you like me to treat you." Keep in mind their desires do not replace God's standards of right and wrong. They may ask for all your money.

► **Demands Positive Action**

Some critics of the Bible deflate the importance of the Golden Rule by pointing out the many examples of similar rules found among ancient philosophers. Thales, the earliest of Greek philosophers (born 640 B.C.) said, "avoid doing what you would blame others for doing". Pittacus, one of the seven wise men of Greece (born 570 B.C.) put it this way, "avoid doing that to your neighbor which you would take amiss if he did it to you." Confucius (born 550 B.C.) when asked, "Is there one word which may serve as a rule of practice for all one's life?" he answered, "is not Reciprocity such a word? What you do not want done to yourself, do not do to others" (Analects 12.2). Philo, a Jew from Alexandria, said, "What you hate to suffer, do not do to anyone else." Isocrates, the Greek orator, said, "What things make you angry when you suffer them at the hands of others, do not you do to other people" (Nicoles

on the Cyprians 3.61). The Stoics had as one of their basic rules, "What you do not wish to be done to yourself, do not you do to any other." Seneca, a Stoic philosopher and statesmen of ancient Rome, wrote, "Let us show our generosity in the same manner that we would wish to have it bestowed on u" (De beneficis 2.1.1). Herbert Spencer, English philosopher (b. 1820) wrote in social statistics, "Every man has freedom to do all that he will, provided he infringes not the equal freedom of any other man." The Jewish Apocryphal Book of Tobit reads, "And what thou thyself hatest, do to no man" (Tobit 4:15). Hillel, one of the great Jewish Rabbis of Jesus day, was asked by a man to teach him the whole law while he stood on one leg. He answered, "What is hateful to thee, do not to another. That is the whole law and all else is commentary."

Similar moral maxims to the Golden Rule are found in the writings of world religions. An early source of the Pahlavi Texts of Zoroastrianism: "That nature alone is good which refrains from doing to another whatsoever is not good for itself." Also it was written: "Do not do unto others whatever is injurious to yourself" (Shayast-na-Shayast 13.29). The religion of Hinduism teaches "One should never do that to another which one regards as injurious to one's own self. This, in brief, is the rule of dharma. Other behavior is due to selfish desires" (Brihaspati, Mahabharata 13.113.8, Critical edition). Jainism claims, "A man should wander about treating all creatures as he himself would be treated" (Sutrakritanga, 1.11.33). Buddhism gives their version of the Golden Rule: "Hurt not others in ways that you yourself would find hurtful" (Udanavarga 5:18). Even though Islam is known for a violent past toward those who they considered infidels, in the Hadith it is written, "None of you [truly] believes until he wishes for his brother what he wishes for himself" (An-Nawawi's Forty Hadith 13, p. 56). In China the ancient religion of Taoism commands, "Regard your neighbor's gain as your own gain, and your neighbor's loss as your own loss" (T'ai Shang Kan Ying P'ien). Today, Scientologist in their work *The Way of Happiness* encourages its adherents: "Try not to do things to others that you would not like them to do to you. Try to treat others as you would want them to treat you."

Notice the difference between these rules and the Golden Rule. Everyone of them is framed in a negative form: "Do NOT do unto others what you do NOT want them to do to you." This is not a proactive treatment of others, but a reactive response. As long as one does not get hurt, everything is fine according to this view. However, the priest and the Levite in the parable of the Good Samaritan did not harm anyone. But neither did they help anyone. The contrast can be seen in the man who brags about not getting his tire punctured or puncturing someone else's tires with the man who helps another change a flat tire.

In contrast, the loving treatment of others is based on positive action. It is the same love Jesus demands of His disciples. He said, "*a new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another*" (Jn. 13:34).

Not even the most positive statement above. Like the Confucian reciprocating rule is positive enough to compare to Jesus' Golden Rule. To do unto others when they do unto you is too self-centered. It limits action until the time the other person first does something good. This treatment of another has nothing to do with what he had done to me, or what he may do.

Silver Rule states, "Don't do to others what you don't want them to do to you." Someone practicing this would argue that they have not harmed anyone. They could honestly claim, "I am good and loving to my neighbor in that I do not harm them as I would not want to be harmed by them robbing, beating, raping, murdering, etc. me." This negative version is a sound and necessary legal principle which promoted justice in the treatment of others. But it stops far short of the scope of the Golden Rule. The Golden Rule is not just avoiding doing injustice to others but actively looking for ways to seek there good. "In the negative form, the Golden Rule could be satisfied by doing nothing. The positive form moves us to action on behalf of other" (Mounce 97). It is far easier to keep the Silver Rule than it is the Golden Rule. With the Silver one merely has to avoid bad or harmful behaviors and with the latter, one must work to find way to do good.

Jesus by inverting the negative and passive maxims of others has transformed the reach and scope of how we treat others boundlessly. He makes it proactive in that He commands us to "do" and

not to wait on others to do to us first.

In Jesus sermon on the plain Luke gives us another time Jesus would give the Gospel Rule using slightly different wording. *“And just as you want men to do to you, you also do to them likewise”* (Luke 6:31). Notice the context of this verse is that it comes after turning the other cheek (6:29); giving to one who asks (6:30); and loving one’s enemies (6:31). It sums up a disciple’s duty to love others.

The Golden Rule is not just for our friends and family, but for everyone we come into contact with in our daily lives. Diogenes Laertius quoted Aristotle as saying, “We should behave to friends as we would wish them to behave to us” (Lives of Eminent Philosophers 5.21). Notice Aristotle limits this action in regard to friends.

► **Demands Life Application**

The Golden Rule is oft quoted but seldom applied. The gold reserves of this nation are locked up in Fort Knox for a good reason, but no good can come from locking up the Golden Rule. It is the means by which we model the Gospel message to the world. It is treating others the way we wish to be treated. It applies to our personal relationships, our family life, our social interactions and our treatment of one another in the congregation of fellow children of God. When applied it would transform our lies into speaking the truth in love, gossip to words of edification, neglect of help to benevolent response, and even stop road rage. Someone has quipped that the Golden Rule for night drivers is “dim unto others as you would have them dim unto you.” When it comes to the use of social media, “Tweet others as you would like to be tweeted.”

The Golden Rule is not meant just to hang in a nice picture frame over the den couch. It was given to be applied to all walks of life. If more husbands truly loved their wives as their own bodies there would be far less divorces (Eph. 5:28). If husbands want a wife with the *“law of kindness”* on her tongue (Prov. 31:26) then he needs to *“speak the truth in love”* to her. If wives want their husbands only to have eyes for her, she needs not to dress immodestly before other men.

This rule of Jesus would go far in aiding the relationships between employers and employees and between co-workers. What if you could switch places with your boss or co-worker? How would you want to be treated?

Obviously, the Golden Rule must be practiced in every congregation of God’s Kingdom. Self-willed brethren who insist on always having their way to the point of destroying congregations and being a stumbling block to the weak should step back and consider this rule. If you were the teacher of the Bible class would you not want every student to come prepared for the class? If you were the song leader would you not like it better if everyone arrived on time and were prepared to worship? What kind of congregation would the church be where you attend if every one was just like you?

The Golden Rule represents the pinnacle of moral teaching. When acted upon it fulfills the second commandment to love one’s neighbor as oneself. It is motivated by the love God shows toward us. “It is only when we have learned to love God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength that we can begin to love our neighbors as ourselves (Matt. 22:37-39; Mark 12:28-31)” (Philip 109).

Questions:

1. True False The Golden Rule is very important but is not the sum total of Christian truth, nor is it God’s plan of redemption.
2. How does the Golden Rule summerize the Sermon on the Mount from chapter five verse seventeen to chapter seven verse eleven?
3. How is the Golden Rule the fulfillment of the Law and the Prophets?

4. Where is the Royal Law found in the Bible?
5. Is the Golden Rule based on selfishness? Explain.
6. What is the iron rule or rule of the jungle?
7. Where is the Golden Rule in Luke found?
8. What is the main differences between the parallels maxims found in other religious and philosophies and the Golden Rule?
9. What is the "royal law"?
10. What is the major difference between man's golden rules and the original Golden Rule by Jesus?
11. How does the statement by Aristotle differ from the Golden Rule?

Application and Discussion:

1. How would application of the Golden Rule help marriages, employer/employee relations, and congregations?
2. If you were lost in sin and ignorant of it and/or how to deal with the guilt of sin what would you want someone to do for you?

Homework: Free hand draw a line on a sheet a paper. Next, take a straightedge and daw a straight line parallel to the one you draw by hand. Notice how crooked yours may appear to the line produced with a straightedge. The Golden Rule acts as a straightedge to show how are treatment of others is lining up with how we are treating others.

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Greatest Commandment

29 Jesus answered him, "The first of all the commandments is: 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. 30 And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.' This is the first commandment. 31 And the second, like it, is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these." – Mark 12:29-31

Jesus was in Jerusalem in the final week of His ministry when the events recorded in our text took place. It was Tuesday of that week, the day that has been called "the great day of questions". Jesus dealt with five questions. Matthew records Pharisees and lawyers asking Jesus questions tempting or testing Him. Chief priests, scribes, and elders asked by what authority He worked. He refused to tell them, probably because of their unbelief. Pharisees and Herodians asked Him about giving God what was His, they marveled at His answer. Next, the Sadducees asked which of seven sisters married to a man in succession would be his wife after the resurrection. When He said none, they gave no response. A single scribe asked about the greatest commandment.

In many pagan religions, the relationship between a person and the deity that is worshiped is based on fear. Anyone who allowed a plurality of gods instantly and automatically set oneself apart from the people of God. Nobody whether scribe, Pharisee, Sadducee, or ordinary child of Abram would have quarreled with the first segment of Jesus' answer or with what He said next. The Greek word for "lord" had several meanings. It could mean the owner of a thing; it could also mean master, one who controls another; it also was used to designate a sovereign ruler whose subjects surrendered control of their lives to Him.

Jesus quoted Deuteronomy 6:4. It is called the Shema, which is the Hebrew word for "hear" and is the first word in the verse. The phylactery, a small leather box that the scribes wore fastened to the head or arm and contained a slip on which the Shema was written. Christ shows this rule has not changed just because we live in the Christian Age.

A person's duties begin with an unqualified love for God. We have managed to convince ourselves that we "fall" in love as accidentally as one might trip over loose carpet. Loving God is a conscious, deliberate choice on our part. We have all seen two dreamy-eyed young people looking longingly at one another. We have all heard of the "look of love." When you love someone with all of your heart, you think about them almost all of the time. You long to be with them. They are the priority in your life. We call this being "in love" and it is wonderful. With regard to our love for God, *"We love, because he first loved us"* (1 John 4:19).

Extent of our Love for God

♥ With All Your Heart - Emotionally Involved

The heart was associated with the intellect, the emotions, and the will. Since "mind" is already mentioned, this is dealing with the "emotions". What Jesus is saying is that we are to love the Lord without pretense. Love Him without reservation or just a portion of our devotion.

A young man proposed to his sweetheart as they sat overlooking a beautiful lake. "Darling," he said, "I love you more than anything else in the whole world, I want you to marry me, I'm not wealthy: I don't have a yacht or a Rolls Royce like Johnny Green, but I love you with all my heart." His sweetheart

thought for a moment and then replied, "I love you with all my heart two, but tell me more about Johnny Green." In regard to our Christian commitment, how many of us are like this fickle young lady? Do we tell God we love Him and want to serve Him, and then carry on a flirtation with the world? Let us not say, "Tell me more about the world," but, "Tell me more about Jesus."

♥ **With All Your Soul - Eternally Focused**

The soul is one's spiritual essence. It is the part of one that is immortal - the I, the person who controls what one thinks and says and does. Love has been abused and watered down by a liberal mind set as a sentimental, syrupy gush about God. Our love is taking time for the eternal relationship. A. W. Tozer once said that, "We are called to an everlasting preoccupation with God." Charles E. Hummel's *The Tyranny of the Urgent* was written 35 years ago. It says, "Don't let the urgent take the place of the important in your life." How easy it is for us, in our hectic world, to spend so much time dealing with pressing matters that we never take time for what is eternally important.

True love of God involves total commitment. Following a great victory, King Cyrus of Persia took as prisoners a noble prince, his wife, and their children. When they were brought into the leader's tent to stand before him, Cyrus said to the prince, "What will you give me if I set you free?" He replied, "I will give you half of all that I possess." "And what will you give me if I release your children?" continued Cyrus. "Your majesty, I will give you all that I possess." The king questioned him further, "But what will you give me if I set your wife at liberty?" Looking at the one he loved so dearly, the prince replied without hesitation, "If you will restore my wife to freedom, I will give you my life." Cyrus was so moved by his devotion that he released the entire family without asking recompense. That evening the prince said to his wife, "Did you not think Cyrus a very handsome man?" "I did not notice him," she answered, "Why, my dear, where were your eyes?" exclaimed her husband. She replied, "I had eyes only for the one who said he would lay down his life for me."

♥ **With All Your Mind - Thoroughly Considered**

The mind is the seat of our reason, knowledge, and wisdom. The word "mind" is not included in the passage in Deuteronomy 6:5. Its addition here emphasizes the place of the intellect in conversion and maturity in faith and life. We are not to serve God emotionally, while committing intellectual suicide.

Don't check your brains in at the door. We don't leave your intellectual bags packed when we worship and serve God. You see, love is not just a momentary feeling; it is a logical and specific action. Loving Jesus doesn't simply mean turning cartwheels in the aisle. This love is not mindless and empty-headed. True love for Jesus manifests itself in every area of life. It is just as wrong to serve God intellectually, but with no emotion as it would be to love Him just out of our emotions.

♥ **With All Your Strength - Fully Lived Out**

Strength represents the whole person. Serve God emotionally and intellectually, but with no actual obedience requiring the exercise of strength (i.e., action) would not be keeping God's commandments and thus a negation of love. Loving God means we are going to have to place His will ahead of ours. It means that we may have to say no to some things that we might want to do. It means that we are going to have to seek the Lord's will and make it paramount in my life. It may mean that we can't go places others can go, watch what others watch or enjoy what they enjoy. God's greatest desire for us is to love Him. We demonstrate our love for God through keeping His commandments. This is the love of God (1 Jn 5:3). This is evidence that we love Jesus (Jn 14:15)

In sixteenth century England, Oliver Cromwell ordered that a soldier be shot for his crimes at the ringing of the evening bell. But that night at the fateful hour, no sound came from the belfry. The girl who was to be married to the condemned man had climbed up into the tower and had clung to the great clapper of the bell to prevent it from striking. Brought before Cromwell to give an account of her actions, she only wept and showed him her bruised and bleeding hands. Cromwell was greatly impressed, and he said, "Your lover is alive because of your sacrifice. He will not be shot!" It doesn't take much of a person to be a lover of God - just all of him there is.

Extent of Our Love for Our Neighbor

After explaining the great command was to love God, Jesus added, *"and the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself'"* (Matt. 22:39). *"You shall love your neighbor as yourself"* was often repeated by Jesus throughout His ministry and elsewhere in the New Testament (Matt. 19:19; 22:39; Mark 12:31; Luke 10:27; Rom. 13:9; Gal. 5:14; James 2:8). Everyone loves themselves. This is the natural instinct. Everyone therefore knows how to begin to love others, because they have learned to love themselves. This, of course, is a generalization. But consider, would you starve yourself? No. So you can have empathy and show love by feeding the hungry.

Just who is the neighbor we are commanded to love? Jesus answered that in His parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37). In short, your neighbor is anyone who is in need of your love. Anyone in trouble who comes across your path whom you can help. You cannot help everyone. You don't have enough money or resources or time. Second, it must be someone who comes across your path. Third, you have to be able to meet the need.

The Pharisees were familiar with the Law's commandment to *"love thy neighbor as thyself"* (Lev. 19:18). But if you interpret "neighbor" to mean those who are faithful Jews, your love is limited. Enemies would be excluded. A Pharisee could see no command to love a Gentile or sinner. To them neighbor is merely someone who is near to you by being related to Abraham and keeping the Law of Moses. In this case a Gentile or sinner or enemy could not classify as a neighbor.

Jesus commands us to even love your enemies. After all, they too fit the definition of a neighbor. In His *Sermon on the Mount* Jesus said, *"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you"* (Matt. 5:43-44).

Did Jesus require the impossible of His disciples. It sounds like a part of an utopian dream where everyone can just love each other and get along. Can a saint really love the unholy? What about loving a rapist, murderers, pornographers, child molesters, etc? Even Jesus' disciples struggled with showing love toward those who were the enemies of Christ. The "sons of thunder", James and John, wanted Jesus to call down fire upon the cities of the Samaritans who rejected Jesus (Luke 9:51-56). When Jesus was about to be arrested, Peter drew a sword and cut off the ear of Malchus (John 18:10). Yet he learned to love instead.

First, we must keep in mind that in the Greek there are different words for love. Sexual love is represented in the term *eros*. *Storge* refers to love for family members. *Phileo* is the love one has based on friendship and emotion. These first three types of love are too limited for the love of enemies. However, *agape* is love which is not founded on friendship, emotion, physical relations or an act of the flesh, it is a love that seeks and works to meet the needs of another no matter what your current attitude may be toward them or how you feel and conversely how they feel about you. *Agape* love is need oriented. God is the Ultimate Judge of the wicked, and God has set a perfect example. Jesus loves His enemies. The best way to get rid of our enemies is to love them to the point they are turned into or friends, brothers and sisters, and fellow lovers of God.

A younger woman searched for several years for her real mother only to find out that the older co-worker she hardly liked was her real mother. Upon this discovery, she was able to get to know her mother and love her. If we recognize one another as family we will love as a family. One of the true marks of discipleship is found in those who love one another. *"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."* (John 13:34,35).

Lee Iacocca once asked legendary football coach Vince Lombardi what it took to make a winning team. "There are a lot of coaches with good ball clubs who know the fundamentals and have plenty of discipline but still don't win the game. Then you come to the third ingredient: If you're going to play together as a team, you have got to care for one another. You've got to love each other. Each player has to be thinking about the next guy and saying to himself: If I don't block that man, Paul is going to get his legs broken. I have to do my job well in order that he can do his." Perhaps the local church could be a

winning team if we were to practice this “third” rule or “*new commandment*” as Jesus put it.

Without Christ’s example of love, we would not know love. Love has been experienced by every child of God because of Christ’s sacrifice on the cross for your sins. It is only because “*He laid down His life for us*” (1 John 3:16b) that we can show His level of love for others. Christ did not just suffer death by those who hated and took His life. He gave up his life or “laid down His life.” The same verb is used elsewhere to describe a shepherd sacrificing his life for the sheep (John 10:11f). Interestingly 1 John 3:16 compares with 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.*” If God was willing to love us enough to sacrifice His Son, why should our love for others require any less than being willing to love them enough to sacrifice our own lives.

Imagine being called upon in a situation where you had to choose between your instinctive need for self-preservation and giving your life as a self-sacrifice for a brother in Christ. Yet this is the standard of love that Jesus set for His disciples. This is not given as an option for John wrote, “*we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren*” (1John 3:16c). Yet so many children of God do not have enough love in their hearts to sacrifice their time, their money, their emotions, etc.

Three things are necessary for one to demonstrate his love for the brethren. First, he “*has this world’s goods*” (1 John 3:17a). Not everyone is able to help another due to their own situation (Gal. 6:10). Second, he “*sees his brother in need*” (1 John 3:1). The term “*need*” here does not mean a brother’s every want but the necessities of life. Finally, he has to choose to open his heart upon and make the sacrifices to meet the needs of another. However, many show their lack of love when they shut up their hearts. John says this is proof that the love of God is abiding in them.

The opposite of love is not always hate, but indifferent to the needs of others is just as unloving as being overtly hateful to another.

It is true that just giving to the needs of others will not prove you have the love of God. Remember, an atheist can be a philanthropist.

Questions:

1. Matching

- | | |
|------------------------------|---|
| _____ 1 Corinthians 13 | a. Emotionally in love with God |
| _____ With all your heart | b. Intellectually in love with God |
| _____ With all your soul | c. What Jews called Deut 6:4 |
| _____ With all your mind | d. Great chapter on love |
| _____ With all your strength | e. Loving God with your eternal being |
| _____ Shema | f. Loving God with every bit of your effort |

True/False

2. _____ We are to love each other like Christ has loved us.
3. _____ Some people are harder to love than others.
4. _____ Speaking the truth is more important than love.

Multiple Choice

5. In the last days (2 Tim. 3:1f) men will be a) lovers of pleasures b) lovers of themselves c) both.
6. We are to love our neighbors and wives as a) God loves us b) as Christ loved John c) as we love ourselves.

Application & Discussion

1. Explain the relationship between love and obeying God's commandments (1 Jn. 5:3).
2. What is the "*new commandment*" Jesus gave His disciples and why is it new?

Homework: Make a list of those you have trouble loving (or liking) and pray for them. List ways you can go about changing your attitude about them.

The Greatest Verse

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. – John 3:16

The single verse of scripture under consideration is one of the all-time beloved and well-known verses in the entire Bible. It can be seen on bumper stickers across America and on TV at every football game. As one of the most frequently quoted Scriptures, no verse in the Bible has been more memorized. Others have referred to it as the "Golden text" or the "Gospel in a Nutshell". Martin Luther called it "the little gospel". Properly considered it epitomizes the content of the gospel: the Good News of what God has done for man and what he expects in return. This text is so simple that a little child can catch its basic meaning and believe it. Yet there is depth here for the most profound thinkers. As you may have guessed from the beginning it is John 3:16.

Regardless to its popularity, this verse is one of the most misunderstood, abused texts of the Word of God. Many have introduced this passage to show that baptism is not necessary to salvation because John 3:16 says nothing about baptism. They will go on to claim it teaches salvation by faith only. Let's give careful consideration as to what this passage really teaches.

Background: "For"

The Greek word "For" (gar) is used to explain a foregoing statement. This conjunction suggests a connection with the previous discourse and favors the view that Jesus is still speaking.

Jesus has a night visitor who sought the Kingdom. Sensing Nicodemus' need, Jesus pointed him to the necessity of the new birth. Nicodemus' view of the Kingdom was perhaps tainted by the narrow concepts of Judaism. "Is not Messiah, then, about to judge the world, to summon all the nations round to hear their doom?" Jesus is striving to inform him of the true spiritual purpose of the Kingdom.

In the course of His explanation, Jesus refers him to the story of the Brass Serpent of Moses in the Wilderness. The Israelites had murmured against Jehovah. The Lord sent fiery serpents among them as a mode of punishment. God instructed Moses to fashion a serpent out of brass and set it upon a standard, and any man who "looked" upon the serpent would live (Num. 21:4-9). This cure was not to be realized in simply "believing". The Israelite who sought healing was required to obediently look upon the image. This brass serpent was typical of the death of Christ. Jesus consistent with the divine plan, must die, and in a manner whereby he would be "lifted up" (Jn. 12:32) so that all men could believe and come to the cross for salvation.

Elements of Greatness:

♥ The greatest being - "God"

He is not a nationalistic or local God. He is not partial to one race or color. As the Great Giver of Grace no one is greater (Js. 1:17). Atheist are naturally excluded from this verse.

♥ The greatest measure - "so"

The Greek term for "So"(houtos) indicates the degree of intensity of God's love. Our finite minds boggle at this concept and requires some measuring device. So our Lord gave the measure of divine love - He gave His only begotten Son. Still the depth and height of God's love is immeasurable.

"Thanks be to God for His unspeakable gift" (2 Cor. 9:15).

♥ **The greatest motive: *love***

Unlike the gods of paganism, who were vicious and cruel, and the cold and indifferent god of modern philosophy, the God of the Bible is loving. *"God is love"* (1 Jn. 4:8). It is not because we are lovable, but because in His own nature He is all loving.

The Love of God involves a total commitment to seek the world's highest good. It is not just "a feeling of pleasure". In romantic love a person sees something in another that draws out their feelings of love. The noun form *"agape"* is not a love which is merely emotional, but *"a disposition to do good unto all"*. Genuine interest and determined dedication are all a part of this love which acts out of concern for others. God thus loved; not passively, but actively in sending His only Son.

Love is to be a two way street. Man must reciprocate love. We were created as an object of God's infinite love, to share in it, and to freely choose to love Him in return. *"We love, because He first loved us"* (1 Jn. 4:19).

♥ **The greatest need: *"the world"*.**

"World" is used to define several things, but here refers to all people of the earth who have lived, will live and are presently living.

Although this world hates the Son and knows nothing of Him or of the Father, and seeks only to serve its own lusts (Jn. 7:7; 1:10; 17:25; 1 Jn. 4:4-6) still God seeks the world.

This world is far from being lovable. For all have sinned, and come short of the Glory of God (Rom. 3:23). The ugly world is rotting with sin. In sinning men show their hatred for God. God feels the pain of the rejection of His creation. *"I was crushed by their adulterous hearts which have departed from me..."* (Ezk. 6:9; cf. Rom. 10:21). Still "man's extremity is God's opportunity".

♥ **The greatest act: *"that he gave"***

Giving is characteristic of God. He has given us life (Ac. 17:25) and His gifts of providence are daily evident upon all men (Ac. 14:17). To give a gift requires that someone must be willing to receive it. There must be a concurrence between the will of the giver and the will of the benefactor. Jesus painfully recognized that the gift was more often than not rejected. *"...they that were his own received him not..."* (Jn. 1:11). Men do have the power to reject gifts!

Furthermore, it is certainly true that an object may be freely given, and yet be conditional. As Jehovah informed Joshua, *"See, I have given into thine hand Jericho..."* (Josh. 6:2). In spite of the fact that Jericho was a gift, the Lord subsequently gave specific instructions for the taking of the city. The response of man is paramount to his salvation.

♥ **The greatest gift: *"His only begotten Son"***

God giving His only Son is a very unique gift. Consider His unique birth - born of a virgin. The writer of Hebrews calls Isaac, Abraham's "only begotten," emphasizing the uniqueness of Isaac's position. Abraham did have other children. "only one" mono "of its kind" (genes) in relation to the promises of God to Abraham. Jesus is different from all others who are sons or daughters of God in that He is God. Furthermore, He came in the flesh and live among men.

This gift is unique as to its exclusiveness. The verbs *"loved"* and *"gave"* speak of an accomplished deed that happened once and for all. They imply that there would be no other "giving" or other redemptive plans.

The distinctive nature of the gift is enhanced when we consider the fact that Christ dies for "sinners" (Rom. 5:8-10). Do you realize that the greatest pain felt by our Lord at Calvary was not the hatred of the Jews, the insults of the Romans, nor the indifference of His own apostles; but rather the greatest pain was seeing the Father, for the very first time, turn His back upon the Son. *"My God, My God why hast Thou forsaken Me"*.

♥ **The greatest impartiality: *"that whoever"***

The term *"whosoever"* literally means "everyone". This phrase reveals the universality of God's saving plan. He gives to whomsoever; that is, to all alike.

What a contrast with Calvinism? The doctrine of predestination, as expressed in the old

Westminster Confession of Faith (1643), and still believed by many today, taught that: "...By the decree of God, for the manifestation of His glory, some men and angels are predestined unto everlasting life, and others foreordained to everlasting death" (Art. III).

When it comes to salvation through Christ there is no limitation by God. It is quite true that only the elect will be saved, but the elect are those who, of their own free will, determine to accept the Lord's offer of salvation. Yes, God's grace appeared *"bringing salvation to all men"* (Tit. 2:11). Truly, God is not willing that any should perish (2 Pet. 3:9). Christ *"died for all"* (2 Cor. 5:15).

The only limitation come by man's refusal to accept God's gift of love. Remember the term *"world"* is a collective universal term, i.e. it takes all men in the mass. *"Whoever"* is a distributive universal term, i.e. it takes all men out of the mass and stands them separate before God.

Of necessity it must be pointed out that no where is it said that God so loves that He will save unbelievers. The next phrase would exclude all those who do not believe in Christ.

♥ **The greatest commitment: *"believes on Him"***

The truth is, there is more to faith than a mental disposition. Belief is not just a mere assent of the mind or mental acceptance of the fact that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. Demon-possessed men have acknowledged that Jesus is God's Son (Mk. 1:23,24; 5:1-7).

Neither is this faith a one time act. Some treat belief in Christ as if it is just a one time deal, then your saved never to be lost. The word *"believe"* in a present tense participle, *"the keeping on believing ones"*. This shows continuous or linear action or a process presently taking place. He lives, breathes, sees, thinks, walks. One must keep on believing or forfeit the eternal life and perish.

This believing in Christ is also includes obeying all of God's commandments. While John 3:16 promises eternal life to him who believes, Hebrews 5:9 attributes eternal salvation to such who obey, thus demonstrating that the two are not mutually exclusive, rather, saving faith includes obedience. After all repentance is said to result in life (Ac. 11:18), but certainly not repentance alone! Also, baptism saves (1 Pet. 3:21), but not baptism alone. Loving the Lord is a part of *"believing"*. *"if any man does not love the Lord, let him be accursed; may the Lord so come!"* (1 Cor. 16:22, Philips). As a matter of fact, faith is inseparably connected to many of God's Commands.. Hearing is inherent prerequisite of believing (Rom. 10:17). Repentance is an connected to belief (Ac. 17:30; Lk. 13:3,5; Ac. 3:19). Confessing is another part of the *"believing"* (Jn. 12:42,43; Rom. 9:10). Unwillingness to confess shows a failure to possess genuine faith. Even baptism can be considered as part of the *"believing"* (Ac. 2:38). The belief that results in eternal life is nothing short of obedience to the Son (Jn. 3:36). Thus, the term *"believes"* stands for the total response of man to the conditions of grace. Belief in this Gospel always involves obedience, with only one certain exception. That exception is Jn. 12:42, where it is said that certain rulers believed on Him but wold not confess Him because of fear. Surely no one would argue that these received eternal life and are included in the *"whosoever"*.

♥ **The greatest deliverance: *"should not perish"***

The term *"perish"* (apollumi) does not suggest annihilation. As Vine pointed out: *"the idea is not extinction but ruin, loss, not being, but of well-being"*. For us to appreciate the deliverance of God, we must know the full extent of the wrath of God. Death and eternal separation from God awaits those who do not keep on believing (and obeying) (Rom. 6:23; 2 Th. 1:7b-9).

♥ **The greatest hope: *"but have eternal life"***

Eternal life is most assuredly is not just eternal existence, for the wicked will exist eternally. It is the exact opposite of everlasting death or *"the second death"* (Rev. 2:11; 20:6,14). In the Bible, *"death"* always connotes the idea of separation (Mt. 7:23; 25:41; 2 Th. 1:9). Conversely, eternal life is everlasting communion with God along with all that involves. The tense used for the verb *"have"* shows that believers have a present possession of life. True believers now possess eternal life. It is a possession that can be lost.. His purpose in coming was to bring life, give life and prepare life. Maintain life is up to us.

Whether or not one believes this to be the greatest verse in the Bible, one cannot help but notice that this small passage contains history, an awesome responsibility, a terrifying warning, and a wonderful

promise for the whole world.

Questions:

1. What has John 3:16 been called?
2. What is the context of John 3:16?
3. How were the Israelites bitten by fiery serpents healed?

4. Matching:

- | | |
|---------------------------------|----------------------------|
| _____ The Greatest Being | a. "believes on Him" |
| _____ The greatest measure | b. "so" |
| _____ The greatest motive | c. "but have eternal life" |
| _____ The greatest need | d. "the He gave" |
| _____ The greatest act | e. "God" |
| _____ The greatest gift | f. "love" |
| _____ The greatest impartiality | g. "should not perish" |
| _____ The greatest commitment | h. "His only begotten Son" |
| _____ The greatest deliverance | i. "the world" |
| _____ The greatest hope | j. "that whoever" |

2. How is God unlike the gods of the pagans?
3. True False God loves man because men have shown love to Him.
4. True False God's gifts are always given unconditionally.

5. What is so unique about God's gift?
6. Who is to be recipients of God's gift?
7. True False The belief that results in eternal life is nothing short of obedience to the Son
8. What does "*perish*" mean?

Application & Discussion:

1. Show how this verse is not promoting the Calvinistic doctrine of "once saved always saved".
2. Show that this verse is not a proof text for salvation by faith only.

Homework: Memorize John 3:16 and be ready to share the 10 points of this great verse with others.

The Noble Bereans

These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so. - Acts 17:11

Consider the following riddle: You come to the fork of the road in the middle of the jungle. One way leads to your camp. The other way leads to the cannibals. You don't know which is which. At the fork stands a native who knows the roads. The native is either from the tribe which always tells the truth or from the tribe which always lies. What one question can you ask him to find the way to your camp? The solution: You can ask, "If I had asked you yesterday, 'Which is the road to my camp?', what should you have said?" If he is from the truthful tribe, he would have shown you the right way. If he is from the lying tribe, he would have shown you the wrong road. But he will lie about what he would have said yesterday, making his answer the truth, the right way. Although this has always been a fascinating riddle, it is not realistic. Never have I met a person or heard of one who always tells lies. After all, even Satan, the father of lies, has been known to tell the truth. I have only known of one who always told the truth and that is Christ Jesus.

In the middle of the road of life stands many preachers. One is telling us to travel one way another points to another. Which is telling the truth? This riddle is made more complex by the realization that most preachers will speak more truth than falsehood. The people of Berea found a noble solution to this long standing problem.

Before looking at their simple solution, let's focus on the stark contrasts between those at Thessalonica and those at Berea. On his second missionary journey, Paul left Philippi, and came to Thessalonica. He preached Christ three consecutive Sabbaths in the synagogue converting several Jews and many God-fearing proselytes, including some chief women of the city.

"...But the Jews who were not persuaded, becoming envious, took some of the evil men from the marketplace, and gathering a mob, set all the city in an uproar and attacked the house of Jason, and sought to bring them out to the people. But when they did not find them, they dragged Jason and some brethren to the rulers of the city, crying out, 'These who have turned the world upside down have come here too. 'Jason has harbored them, and these are all acting contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying there is another king-- Jesus.' And they troubled the crowd and the rulers of the city when they heard these things. So when they had taken security from Jason and the rest, they let them go." (Acts 17:5-9).

Paul's success stirred the jealousy of the Jews. They stirred up a mob, attacked Jason the host of Paul and made false accusations against the believers. From this account we clearly see the contrasting traits of the Thessalonica.

A Blind Approach to Bible Study

x Prejudice

If we have already made up our minds before a careful study of the evidence, we will never learn the truth. Evidence becomes irrelevant. Preconceived ideas inherited from parents or denominational

preachers cloud their mind and Truth is not allowed. They clamor: "That's not what my parents' church believes" or "Let me ask my preacher". It is impossible to over estimate the extent to which prejudice will take the enemies of the truth. Many persons do not see these prejudicial attitudes, because they themselves have been blinded to the truth. Since learning the truth demands a ready mind, let us avoid the qualities which close minds.

x Passion

Far too many people base their religion on the subjectiveness of feelings rather than on objective Truth. They will argue: "I'd rather have this feeling than a stack of Bibles a mile high." Feelings can be quite deceptive. Many people felt very safe a few moments before the terrorist hijacked jets flew into the twin towers.

x Preference

What we want the truth to be often keeps us from opening our minds to learn what the truth really is. Hasty generalizations and fixed opinions must give way to the facts. It is not what we want (salvation by "faith only", instrumental music, clergy, women preachers, etc.) that matters, it is what the truth demands. The true emanates from Him, not from within ourselves.

x Pride

Pride hinders a ready mind. Naaman, the commander of the Syria army, had leprosy. He went to Elisha to be healed. Elisha sent a servant to tell Naaman to wash seven times in the river, Jordan, to be clean. Naaman stomped away mad with pride, because he passionately felt Elisha would and should have come out to tell him personally. Furthermore, his preference were the rivers of Syria to that of Jordan (2 Kings 5). Later, with the wisdom of a servant he humbled himself to the commands of the prophet, obey the truth, and was cleansed. If we refuse to admit we have been wrong, pride will keep us from serious study and salvation.

x Preoccupation

These Jews at Thessalonica were preoccupied with their traditions and status. Some today are too preoccupied with their traditions, denomination, creeds, reputation, etc. Life the rich, young ruler they have too much to lose to following Jesus.

x Persecution

Consider Paul in preaching during his missionary journey's and in the custody and courts of his enemies. He stood virtually alone as the contemporary scholars contradicted him. The level of contention has no bearing on what is right or wrong, true or false. Jesus was often persecuted by the Jewish leaders. Attacking the messenger never changes the truthfulness of the message.

A Noble Approach to Bible Study

Paul found the people of Berea, the Jews in particular, far more receptive to his preaching. The name of the city or its citizens has been given to religious papers, at least one college and no less than seven towns in this country. Yet the ancient city is hardly known. Outside of Acts 17:20-25 and 20:4, the city is not mentioned in the Bible. The Encyclopedia Britannica does not mention it. The city had no other call to fame. Could it be that this lack of sophistication had something to do with the nobility of the people? The Macedonian city was about fifty miles southwest of Thessalonica on the eastern slope of the Olympian range not far from the famous Mount Olympus. It was an out of the way city. Perhaps its obscurity caused Paul to go there after having been severely opposed both in Philippi and Thessalonica.

What made the Bereans noble? It was their right reaction to God's Word. Their attitude is a glaring contrast to that of the Thessalonians. The Jews in this city persecuted Paul. *"Then the brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea. When they arrived, they went into the synagogue of the Jews. These were more fair-minded (noble) than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so. Therefore many of them believed, and also not a few of the Greeks, prominent women as well as men."* (Acts 17:10-12). Reaped from this notable passage are the various things which made the

Bereans the "noblemen" of the Bible.

A Noble Attitude: *Readiness of Mind*

In ancient times noble meant "well-born" or "better-bred" or "high-born." The term is found only here and in Luke 19:12 and 1 Corinthians 1:25. Their nobleness did not consist in their birthright, wealth, or position in society. According to W.E. Vine this word "noble-minded" in the King James and "fair-minded" in the New King James Version means "eagerness, willingness, readiness" (p. 250).

Those who truly have nobility of character will demonstrate the attributes of those a Berea. They have prepared themselves to be receptive to the Will of God. They are like the scribe and priest Ezra who *"prepared his heart to seek the Law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach statutes and ordinances in Israel"* (Ezra 7:10).

None are noble who lack this receptive attitude toward the preaching of the Word of God. Many, today, do not show a readiness of mind to hear what another has to say, but is content to hear only one side. The Word of God is not to be forced upon unwilling minds.

Years ago we had a telephone evangelism outreach program. This is where we would assign portions of the phone book to members who would call up people in the community and invite them to church or a Bible Study. My wife happened to call a Lutheran preacher who listened with interest until she said he could join us for a Bible Class and even ask questions. At his point he interrupted, "What? You mean your husband, as a minister of God will permit members to publically question him? I am a minister and no one needs to question me. I am there to teach them what the Bible says." He was "ordained" clergy and laity could not compare his teaching with that of the Scriptures.

A Noble Effort: *Examined*

God has placed His Word well within reach of us all. He has so formed us and so written the Bible that it is on a level with our understanding. Many would prefer just to follow what their favorite preacher or the elders' teaching, but we must be willing to examine the Scriptures for ourselves to discern truth. The term "examine" is used by ancient Greeks of a judicial investigation to get to the truth of innocence or guilt.

Man, generally speaking, is lazy. It is much easier to let someone else do the studying. Some men are wilfully antagonistic, like the Thessalonians; some are intelligently searching, like the Bereans; and some are weakly receptive, like the Athenians (Ac. 17:16-21). Most people to refuse to look at the evidence do so not out of knowledge and investigation but out of blind ignorance.

Men today who seek the answer to their own salvation will find that answer the same way the Bereans found it. They, too, must search the scriptures the the evidence to support faith. *"You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me"* (John 5:39).

Enthusiasm for truth is a noble form of faith; and each who pursues it for himself will enjoy a majestic portion of its rewards. It results in a baby like craving for milk. *"Therefore...as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby"* (1 Peter 2:1-2).

A Noble Source: *the Scriptures*

The Berans used the Scriptures as the criterion to determine what is truth. Comparing scripture with the use of scripture is wise. Jesus did so when tempted by the Devil in Matthew 4. Truth should not be decided on the basis of friendship, education, social status, or the like, nor can it be determined by man-made denominational creeds. Our feelings, ideas, intuitions, and impressions are not the standard. Only the scriptures which are inspired of God and constitute a basis of authority for religious doctrine and practices.

Spiritual nobility requires the one have enough faith to accept what the Scriptures teach about baptism, one true church, social gospel, social drinking, divorce and remarriage, etc. Even if it seems as unreasonable as sacrificing Isaac must have seemed to Abraham. The Bereans recognized scriptures as the Word of God and thus final authority.

By recognizing the true source of Truth, one immediately gains insight to its great value. One will

not soon part with a valuable object. Solomon wrote, *"Buy the truth and sell it not"* (Pr. 23:23). This is the way of saying that truth is so important to us that there is no price great enough to buy it from us, without being the loser in the transaction. Truth alone can save our soul and our soul is more valuable than the combined riches of the whole world (Mt. 16:26).

✍ **A Noble Frequency: Daily**

Paul expounded the scriptures daily in Thessalonica, their reaction sent Paul fleeing for his very life. The Bereans, instead of rejecting his interpretation, examined the scriptures for themselves. Diligence and serious study are absolute requirements, if we are to discern the truth amid conflicting voices. Difficult subjects test our willingness to pursue truth.

Many will argue that they do not have time to study the Bible. Yet, it may take very little time each day just to read it. The whole Bible can be read in 71 hours. If you break that down into minutes and divide it into 365 days, you could read the Bible from Genesis to Revelation in only 12 minutes a day.

✍ **A Noble Objective: Whether so**

Realizing that the preacher was Paul, why would they check up on him? Was it because they suspected he was a false teacher? NO! Yet, they wanted to make sure that he taught the truth, because it pertained to their eternal salvation. They needed to know whether the interpretation which the apostle put upon the Old Testament Scriptures was the true one. They were not willing to put their souls in jeopardy by taking the preacher at his word. Remember, it is everyone's duty to work out their own salvation. You must all *"...work out your own salvation with fear and trembling"* (Phil. 2:12).

A certain amount of caution is required when investigating what is true or false. The Bereans were not gullible. They had an open and honest heart, they let the truth in. But they were not so open-minded that they let their brains fall out.

The doctrine of Christ does not fear scrutiny. The Creator gave us minds and it is high time we started to use them and not depend on another to do our thinking for us. If every preacher, every church, and every Greek student in the world believed error, one could still know the truth with certainty by following the Scriptures. The more Scripture study and the less blind accepts will lead to genuine conviction of truth.

✍ **A Noble Decision: Obeying the Word**

The end result of Paul's preaching and the Bereans' noble attitude toward it was that *"many of them believed, and also not a few of the Greeks, prominent women as well as men"* (Acts 17:12). Obeying Him strictly and carefully is not legalism. Obedience as an intense concern for doing the precise Will of God is a reflection of our faith in God and our love for Him.

However, others who were not as noble minded followed Paul to hinder his preaching. *"But when the Jews from Thessalonica learned that the word of God was preached by Paul at Berea, they came there also and stirred up the crowds. Then immediately the brethren sent Paul away, to go to the sea; but both Silas and Timothy remained there"* (17:13,14). It would be the Bereans receptiveness and examination of the truths coming from Silas and Timothy which would not help these new converts to survive and thrive.

Won't you study God's Word in the noble manner of the Bereans and make your decision to obey Him?

Questions:

1. The people of Berea were in contrast with the people of a) Ephesus b) Athens c) Thessalonica.
2. How do prejudices hinder Bible Study?

3. Why are feelings an unreliable source of truth?
4. Show how Naaman demonstrated pride, passion (feelings), and personal preferences over the words of God's prophet, Elisha.
5. Attacking the messenger never changes the truthfulness of the message.

Matching

- | | |
|---------------------------|----------------------|
| 6. _____ right attitude | a. Daily |
| 7. _____ right effort | b. Whether so |
| 8. _____ right source | c. Obeying the word |
| 9. _____ right frequency | d. Readiness of mind |
| 10. _____ right objective | e. Examined |
| 11. _____ right decision | d. The scriptures |

Application & Discussion:

1. What can we do to develop and keep an open mind toward the scriptures?
2. What is the proper procedure in examining the scriptures? Or what steps should be taken when examining the Word?
3. What is the ultimate motive for checking out what the preacher says?

Homework: Take the teachings from a current class or preaching of a recent sermon and examine it to see if it is in line with the Word of God.

Preaching the Whole Counsel of God

"I kept back nothing that was helpful, but proclaimed it to you, and taught you publicly and from house to house..For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God" – Acts. 20:20,27

While preaching in the panhandle of Florida, I received a phone call from a man in Georgia whom I had met during a recent Gospel Meeting. He was looking at the preacher position that was opening at a near by congregation and wanted to know if he could use me as a reference. I barely knew the man, so I asked him to tell me a little bit about himself. He informed me that he was not like some of these other preachers. He did not preach about personal issues and opinions like smoking, drinking, modesty, marriage, divorce and remarriage, etc. At this point I assured him that I would definitely give the brethren my recommendation. After the call ended I immediately called up one of the brethren at the afore mentioned church and highly recommended that they do not consider using this preacher. He was not a preacher like Paul who told the elders of Ephesus *"I kept back nothing that was helpful, but proclaimed it to you, and taught you publicly and from house to house..For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God"* (Acts. 20:20,27).

The context of our text is when Paul was delivering his emotionally charged farewell message to the Ephesian elders at Miletus (Acts 20:17-35). Paul had labored with them for three years. He started in the Synagogue and due to opposition moved to *"reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus. And this continued for two years, so that all who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks"* (Acts 19:9,10). Due to Paul's preaching there was much growth in God's Kingdom. *"And many who had believed came confessing and telling their deeds...So the word of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed"* (Acts 19:18,20).

Before moving on to explore the implications of Paul's preaching, it would be wise to define some of the terms in the text. First, *"counsel"* refers to a deliberateness and thoughtfulness of the correct path to pursue in a given topic or issue. The term *"whole"* referring to the Word of God means all scripture or all that God has revealed on a given matter. All scripture is from the breath of God and profitable for man being complete in doing every good work (2 Tim. 3:16,17). The Apostles were given the Holy Spirit to guide them into all truth (John 16:13) and at the Great Commission He instructed them to teach other disciples *"to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age"* (Matt. 28:20). Paul preached the Truth, the whole Truth and nothing but the Truth. This does not imply that Paul preached everything God had ever revealed. Or that he went through every verse of the Old Testament word by word. Paul did not fail to give them the complete message they needed from God in his preaching. The final term to consider is *"profitable"*. Paul speaks of all scripture being profitable. *"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work"* (2 Tim. 3:16,17). By preaching God's teachings or doctrine Paul proclaimed what is right. His preaching showed what was wrong by way of reproof. In correction He shows brethren how to get right. And by instructing men in righteousness he explains how one can stay right. Profitable preaching tells men what is wrong, how to get right, and how to stay right. It is this type of balanced preaching that proclaims the whole and profitable Will of God.

Balanced Preaching Involves...

The congregation should be fed a balanced spiritual diet and not be given the same few lessons over and over again. Just how does a preacher and teacher of God's Word accomplish this? What is involved?

■ Private/Public Preaching

Paul had two avenues open for preaching. First, publically *"he went into the synagogue and spoke boldly for three months, reasoning and persuading concerning the things of the kingdom of God...and this continued for two years, so that all who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks"* (Acts 19:8,10). He also was able to preach and teach privately. He said, *"I kept back nothing that was helpful, but proclaimed it to you, and taught you publicly and from house to house"* (Acts 20:20).

■ Oral/Written

Paul spoke the words of Truth, but he also taught many by use of his epistles sent to churches and to individuals.

■ Old Testament/New Testament

While preaching in Fort Walton Beach, Florida a man came to me and claimed that it was wrong to preach out of the Old Testament. He claimed that he did not even carry a Bible to church with an Old Testament. Noticing he was holding a little Gideon Bible, I asked to see it. Showing him his Bible included both Psalms and Proverbs did nothing to change his mind. I referred him to the elders if he thought I should never preach using the Old Testament. Others have argued that "we are New Testament Christians, so why do we need the Old Testament?"

Paul did not have the New Testament to preach from. When Paul wrote 2 Timothy 3.16, the *"scriptures"* he referenced were those of the Old Testament. We cannot limit ourselves to the New Testament. How can we expect to declare the *"whole counsel of God"* when we neglect the first 75%. The New Testament is written upon the foundation of the Old. Someone has wisely observed, "The Old Testament is the New Testament concealed while the New Testament is the Old Testament revealed." How can one effectively comprehend the book of Hebrews without a clear understanding of the Law of Moses. *"For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope"* (Rom. 15:4).

■ Positive/Negative

Norman Vincent Peale made popular *The Power of Positive Thinking*. Many today want to hear preaching that is positive. But what is positive and what is negative preaching. Remember Johnny Mercer's lyric: "You gotta accentuate the positive, eliminate the negative, latch on to the affirmative, and don't mess around with Mister In Between." However, "you gotta accentuate the whole counsel of God, eliminate human opinions, latch on to the doctrine of Christ, and don't mess around with Mister Compromise." Positive often boils down to what one likes and negative preaching is simply that which one does not like. Paul told Timothy to *"Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables"* (2 Tim. 4:2-4). You cannot effectively preach the positive without also preaching the negative. *"For the wages of sin is death"* this is the negative. Yet the verse continues, *"but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord"* (Rom. 6:23).

■ Heaven/Hell

Brethren can be very "helpful" on how to preach. One old man told me I did not need to preach on hell. He explained, "I already know how to get to hell. You need to preach on how I can get to heaven." The fact is Jesus preached about both Heaven and Hell. He understood a balanced approach to both. To get to Heaven one needs to know how to avoid Hell.

- **Encouragement/Rebuke**

A famous denominational preacher does not believe preachers should convict people of their guilt before God. He believes this leads to anxiety and fear. This is not Paul's instruction to Timothy. *Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. **Convince, rebuke, exhort**, with all longsuffering and teaching*" (2 Tim. 4:2).

- **Works of the Flesh/Fruit of the Spirit**

When Paul preached, he did not just speak on the fruit of the Spirit like love, joy, peace, etc. (Gal. 5:22,23). He wrote and preached about the works of the flesh: *"adultery...outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions...drunkenness, and the like"* (Gal. 5:19-21). Dealing with sin is dealing with reality of everyday life which involves the evils of social drinking; dancing; gambling; lascivious dress; materialism; etc.

- **General/Specific**

Some today are willing to preach about sin, so long as they do not get to personal by mentioning anything too specific. There is a trend toward maintaining distance and neutrality in preaching on specific sinful behavior. Peter was specific on Pentecost by *"wicked hands have crucified and slain"* (Acts 2:23). John the baptist told Herod with regard to being married to his brother's wife: *"it is not lawful for thee to have her"* (Matt. 14:4).

- **Doctrines of God/Traditions of Men**

Those who preach on false doctrines like Calvinism or mention the names of false teachers are often condemned. Yet Paul often warned of false teaching and named the false teachers. *"Some having rejected, concerning the faith have suffered shipwreck, of whom are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I delivered to Satan that they may learn not to blaspheme"* (1 Tim.1:19-20). Jesus preached often against the false doctrines of the rabbis and pharisees (Matthews 5:21f).

What Happens When We Fail to Teach the Whole Counsel of God?

Paul explained to the elders of Ephesus, *"I kept back nothing that was helpful, but proclaimed it to you, and taught you publicly and from house to house... For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God"* (Acts 20:20,27). The phrase "kept back" or the term "shunned" is from the Greek word *hupostello* and is used in both verses twenty and twenty-seven. It means to draw back or to withhold. The term was used of soldiers who "draw back" or retreat out of fear. Paul never avoided declaring the truth out of cowardice. He even rebuke a fellow apostle, Peter, to his face in Galatians 2:11-21.

So much preaching in the world today shuns or shrinks from preaching on Hell, specific sins, false doctrines and false teachers. Just what are the consequences of failing to preach the whole counsel of God?

- **Peril of the Partial View**

When men fail to preach or teach the whole will of God on a subject, they can leave their audience misguided with having only a partial view. This is well-illustrated in the story of the six blind men in India examining an elephant. One touches the side of the elephant and declares that it is like a wall. Another grabs its trunk and shrieks that an elephant is a snake. Next, one of them feels its tusk and claims the animal is like a spear. Grabbing a leg another believes the animal to be like a tree. "An elephant is a lot like a rug" claims the man touching the elephant's ear. Finally, the brave blind man who pulls on the elephant's tale convinces him the beast is like a rope. This is the peril of the partial view. None of the men really know what an elephant is without getting the big picture from what all have discovered. Preaching and teaching is not be confined to a few favorite topics or passages. Some have preaching on John 3:16 and declared that salvation is by "faith only." Yet the only time the phrase "faith only" is found in the Bible is in James 2:24: *"You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only."* A partial view of what it takes to be saved could lead to losing one's soul.

- **Truth is Compromised**

Thomas Jefferson constructed an eighty-four page version of the Bible. The virgin birth and the resurrection are left out. It contains no mention of the deity of Christ. In fact, all miraculous events are excluded. Anyone could make a version of the Bible where it includes only what they believe and exclude those things which are opposed. It may include many truths, but the Truth would be compromised.

With a “cut and paste” approach to preaching many compromise the Truth instead of upholding it. Satan deceived Eve by compromising the truth about the forbidden tree in the garden of Eden. Sarah and Abraham compromised on God’s promises by using Hagar to produce a son. King Saul did so when he failed to kill all the Amalekites and King Agag. Ananias and Siphirra compromised the truth when they attempted to deceive the God about the amount of money they had promised. To agree to preach on marriage but agreed not to preach on divorce is a dangerous compromise.

■ **Men Instead of God are Pleased**

When the whole truth is not preached many who have itching ears and cannot stomach the truth on some subject will be pleased (2 Tim. 4:3-4). God will never be pleased with His will being revised and abridged. Paul wrote, *“For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I still pleased men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ”* (Gal. 1:10). Today, a preacher who refuses to compromise on preaching the whole Will of God will not be very popular, lose some friends, not be asked for meetings and just might have to move away. Preachers should never be like professional politicians who find out what the people want to hear and give them what they want. Such men are mere hirelings and are being led instead of leading. This type of false shepherd *“sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees; and the wolf catches the sheep and scatters them”* (Jn. 10:12).

■ **Souls Are Lost**

Billy Graham would cite John 5:24: “We are told ‘He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life.’ This means that eternal life begins the moment we accept Christ as a Savior and Lord”(from My Answer 8/9/56). However, James 2:24 says: *“You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only.”* Quakers, Christian Scientists, Salvation Army have no physical ordinances of baptism. Failure to preach on this subject will rob the audience of Jesus’ promise to those who believe and are baptized. *“He that believes and is baptized will be saved”* (Mark 16:16). Jehovah Witnesses’ doctrine declares “Repentance must precede, but sin not washed away by baptism” (Make Sure of all Things, 1953, p. 30). God sent a preacher named Ananias to tell Paul, *“why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord”* (Acts 22:16). Perhaps millions will be lost by following the partial gospel of Billy Graham and the Jehovah’s Witnesses.

■ **Guilty of the Blood**

Paul said, *“woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!”* (1 Cor. 9:16). God gave warning to the watchmen and shepherds of Ezekiel’s day which applied to the prophet as well. *“When I say to the wicked, ‘O wicked man, you shall surely die!’ and you do not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood I will require at your hand”* (Ezek. 33:7-9). *“When I say to the wicked, ‘You shall surely die,’ and you give him no warning, nor speak to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life, that same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood I will require at your hand. 19 Yet, if you warn the wicked, and he does not turn from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but you have delivered your soul”* (Ezek. 3:18-19).

Failure to declare the whole Will of God can and will result in some very serious consequences for both the preacher/teacher and his audience. They will suffer confusion from have received only a partial view. Truth will be compromised and this will only please men and not God. Souls will be lost and the preachers will be held accountable for these lost souls. Best to just preach the whole counsel of God.

Questions:

1. What is the context our Acts 20:20,27?

2. What does the phrase "*whole counsel*" mean in the text?
3. Why is it important to preaching privately to individuals and not just publically from the pulpit?
4. True False Proclaim the whole counsel of God does not involve writing.
5. Did Paul preaching from the Old Testament scriptures? If so, explain why?
6. Why are both "positive" and "negative" preaching essential?
7. What is being specific in preaching essential?
8. True False The writers of the New Testament never spoke out against specific false teaching or false teachers by name.
9. What is the "peril of the partial view"?
10. Give illustrations from the Bible of those who compromised the Truth.
11. How came preachers become men-pleasers?
12. True False Failing to declare the whole counsel of God could result in people being lost in sin.

13. What is to become of the preacher who fails to preach the whole counsel of God?

Application & Discussion:

1. How should a preacher or teacher respond if asked not to teach on a specific Bible topic, like “hell” for example?
2. What should a Congregation do if a preacher or teacher refuse to teach on a specific Bible topic?

Homework: Meditate on our needs and those of the congregation and make suggestions of topics, questions, passages, etc. for the preachers and teachers of the congregation.

Metamorphosis vs. Cloning

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

– Romans 12:1-2

After eating his way out of an egg, the lonely caterpillar slowly crawls across the forest floor constantly eating old leaves. One day he climbs up a branch and spins a cocoon around his body. After this he enters a process of transformation known as metamorphosis. In the spring the earthly land-bound caterpillar has transformed into an air born creature that no longer crawls around eating leaves, but is a beautifully, colored winged-creature that flies or flutters from one flower to another drinking its sweet nectar.

This process is used in Romans 12:1-2 of a Christian in our text to describes the change that takes places as the sinner who partakes of the old, rotten ways of this world and is transformed into a heavenly creature.

With this begins the more practical section of Paul's epistle to the Romans from chapters twelve to sixteen. This is not to say that the previous eleven chapters of Romans represent impractical teaching. The doctrine taught in the first part is applied to the Christian's day to day life in the second part.

Living righteously before God who has blessed the saint with salvation requires three things commanded here by Paul. First, the dedication of one's body to God which is a reasonable service unto Him. Second, refusal to be conformed to the image or fashion of the age. Finally, transformation by the renewing of the mind.

Paul begins this section by getting his reader's attention: "*I beseech you.*" Carrol Osburn: "When a Greek reader saw this word, he knew it meant to prick up your ears, there is an important statement coming." (Dunkin 294). This is an urgent "appeal, based on the gospel, to those who are already believers to live consistently with the gospel they have received." (C.E.B. Cranfield, The Epistle to the Romans, ICC, 2 vols (Edinburgh, T & T Clark 1975), 2:597).

The transition between the theology of the first eleven chapters transitions to the practical application with the term "*therefore.*" This term answers the question about why Paul has spent the past eleven chapters taking about justification is by faith and not through Law of Moses. Because of the content of the previous chapters, this section and these three commands are essential. Mike Willis in his lecture of *The Renewing of Your Mind* gives an excellent summation of Romans chapters one through eleven. "In 1:8-3:20, he shows man's need of the gospel, for we have all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, in 3:21-5:21 he shows that justification is available to all men on the condition of faith; in 6:1-7:25 he answers some possible objections to the grace of God; in 8:1-39 he shows the positive benefits of the grace of God; and in 9:1-11:36 he vindicates God's treatment of the Jews and Gentiles" (Willis 1).

The motivation to obeying these three commands is based on "*the mercies of God*" (12:1). This phrase sums up what God has done for all sinners. God, in his mercy, has not given us what we deserve, but what we do not deserve. "*For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord*" (Rom. 6:23). Toward the end of the previous chapter Paul wrote, "*for God has committed them all to disobedience, that He might have mercy on all*" (Romans 11:32). In the text, mercy is plural. Showing all what God has done for us in the Gospel.

Because of His mercies Christians are indebted to Him and should be moved by the manifold mercies shown for our misery in sin. This was Paul's feelings about what God's mercy had done for him. *"This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief. However, for this reason I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show all longsuffering, as a pattern to those who are going to believe on Him for everlasting life"* (1 Tim. 1:15-16). This is a reasonable response to being redeemed from the wrath of God's judgment.

Sacrifice Your Body

Sacrifices were a necessary part of serving God under the Old Law. There were two types of sacrificers. Those that involved atonement for sin, such as, the sin offerings; trespass offerings; and the annual atonement sacrifice. These sacrifices are not necessary in Christ who is our sacrificial Passover lamb and whose blood has cleansed us of all sins (Heb. 10:4; 1 John 1:7-2:2). Jesus died to sacrifice Himself once for all rendering all daily sacrifices obsolete (Heb. 10:11,12). However, there is another type of sacrifice commanded under that Law of Moses. It is the sacrifices which come after atonement, such as, the peace offering, free-will offering and offering of thanksgiving. These are the ones which would be comparable with the sacrifices of the New Testament Christian. As the Israelites had daily sacrifices, so we *"also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ"* (1 Peter 2:5).

As part of a royal priesthood all Christians are to take their body and make it a sacrifice and presented to God. "In the Septuagint (Greek Old Testament), *paristemi* (to present) was often used as a technical term for a priest's placing an offering on the altar" (MacArthur 142). A sacrifice is something which is "given up" for another or in service of God.

The object of this sacrifice in the text is not an animal or drink or grain offering, but the Christian's body. Note a person is separate or distinct from their body. It is in contrast to the *"mind"* in verse two. One's body is at God's disposal. The Christian's body belongs to Him. Consider what Paul told the Corinthians about the body of a Christian. *"Now the body is not for sexual immorality but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body... Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's"* (1 Cor. 6:13,19,20).

Christian service to God requires us to give up the notion of "my body" and "my right to do with it as I please." Our tongues are not to be used for lying or gossiping but for speaking the truth in love and building others up with words of edification. Our hands are to be used for stealing. *"Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need"* (Eph. 4:28). Even the life of our body is to be given up in service to God. Theodore of Heraclea, a Christian martyr died in AD 306. To his persecutors he said, "I know not your gods. Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, is my God. Beat, tear or burn me, and if my words offend you, cut out my tongue, every part of me is ready when God calls for it as a sacrifice" (quotes in Boa 364).

Paul lists three characteristics of the sacrifice of our bodies to God. First, the sacrifice is to be *"living."* The offering of dead animals was no longer acceptable to God. Unlike dead animals who are ignorant of the sacrifice, Christians willingly and knowingly offer themselves in service to God. However, the problem with a living sacrifice is that it tends to get up and crawl off and run away from the altar. As a living sacrifice based on the free-will of the one offering it, the sacrifice is continual. Dead sacrifices could only be offered once. In the Old Testament the worshiper made a sacrifice of an animal. In the New Testament the worshiper is to be the sacrifice. This too is reasonable since, we have been made alive through the sacrifice of Christ.

Next, the body is to be a *"holy"* sacrifice. Just as a lamb without blemish was set apart to be sacrificed to God by an Israelite under the Law of Moses, so now Christians are to be set apart as holy unto the Lord. The term "holy" means pure. It is based on the spiritual purity or sinlessness of Christ and

God's Holy nature. *"As He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, 'Be holy, for I am holy'"* (1 Peter 1:15-16).

Finally, the sacrifice of the body of the Christian is *"acceptable to God."* Not only will God exclusively accept a holy sacrifice, He demanded one that was without blemish. God rejected the blind, lame, and sick animals the Jews tried to sacrifice to Him in the Old Testament. *"And when you offer the blind as a sacrifice, Is it not evil? And when you offer the lame and sick, is it not evil? Offer it then to your governor! Would he be pleased with you? Would he accept you favorably?" Says the Lord of hosts*" (Mal. 1:8). The sacrifice is to be "pleasing" unto God. It does not matter how pleasing or acceptable it is to us. Today, the saints do the same thing when they strive to offer God the leftovers of their life. Some will even promise to give their time and energy to the Lord after they retire. What God gets is to little time and a broken down, old body. The object of our sacrifice is our body. The quality of that sacrifice is important to God. Giving one's body to the Lord is very pleasing to Him. It is not just giving a sacrifice that is pleasing to God. All the pagans had to do was to please their god with an offering. However, God requires obedience as well as sacrifice. As Samuel informed the rebellious King Saul, *"Has the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, As in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, And to heed than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, And stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, He also has rejected you from being king"* (1 Sam 15:22-23).

The service or worship of sacrificing the body of the Christian to God is reasonable. The word *"reasonable"* is from the Greek *logikos* from which is derived our English words "logic" and "logical." It is only logical or within sound reasoning that a Christian should worship God by sacrificing his body to the Lord. Previously, they had offered their bodies to a life of sin, instead of a life of serving God. *"Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts. And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God"* (Rom. 6:12,13). This former behavior was not a logical use of the body. A Christian should not lend his ears to gossip, his lips to tell lies, his feet to follow the crowd to do evil, his hands to steal, his flesh to fornicate, etc. But God does not just want their outward bodies, but He wants the inward mind of each one.

Conform Not to this Age

Next, Paul informs the Roman brethren to be non-conformist when it comes to the fashions or schemes of this age. Outwardly they have been conformed to the image or ways of the world around them. This was their past life. Everyone conforms to something. The term *"conformed"* comes from the Greek term *suschematizo* from which we have the English term "schematic" and "scheme." The world has its fashion or scheme. Paul therefore warns Christians to *"put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil* (Eph. 6:11) *lest Satan should take advantage of us; for we are not ignorant of his devices"* (2 Cor. 2:11).

The term *"world"* in the Greek is literally "age." It is the beliefs and practices of this age. *"The whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one"* (1 John 5:19). The sinner of this age *"whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them"* (2 Cor. 4:4). But Christ *"who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father"* (Gal. 1:4).

Every age has its worldview that is often in conflict with God's Will. So *"don't let the world around you squeeze you into its own mold"* (J. B. Phillips). It is natural for man who is a social being to be pressured to conform to his peers. Mankind often suffers with a herd mentality. Moses warned, *"you shall not follow a crowd to do evil"* (Ex.23:2a). If you are looking more and more like the rest of the world and not like Christ, than it is proof you have been watching the wrong fashion model and reading the wrong fashion tips.

The world's fashion or mold is fleeting or changing. *"...for the fashion of this world paseth away"*

(1 Cor. 7:31, KJV). Thus right and wrong is relative and not absolute.

Transform Your Mind

Instead of conforming outwardly to a carnal standard, Christians are to be transformed. The Greek term is *metamorphousthe* meaning “to change into another form...to transfigure, and transform” (Thayer 405). It is used to describe Christ in the Transfiguration in Matthew 17. The English term “metamorphosis” comes from this Greek word. Just as a caterpillar spins its cocoon and transforms into a butterfly, so the former sinner by renewing of his mind transforms into the saint who thinks and acts like God. This change begins at baptism. When the old man of sin is removed and the new man is born. We might think of a person transformed from a sinner into a Christian when he is born again (John 3:3,5). *“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new”* (2 Cor. 5:17).

Becoming a Christian requires a reprogramming in the mind. The text calls this a “renewing” (Greek, *anakainosis*) of the mind. This requires us to *“put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him”* (Col. 3:10). *“Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day”* (2 Cor. 4:16). Renewing of the mind is not an instant and automatic process. It requires determination. *“Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth”* (Col. 3:2).

The Christian, instead of being a human chameleon that changes to fit into its surroundings, needs to change from within by renewing the way he thinks. Conforming takes place from without or outwardly. Whereas renewing of the mind is an inward transformation. Many people need a fashion make-over in this world. Every Christian must have a mind make-over in order to be like-minded with God. The way God thinks is the way a Christians must think. Change begins from within the mind. *“By the complete change that has come over your minds”* (TCNT). This involves a change in what the Christian thinks upon. *“Whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things”* (Phil. 4:8). This transformation is based upon what the mind is permitted to feed upon. As a man thinks so is that man (see Proverbs 23:7). *“We are what we eat.”* And if that is so then I am a big bowl of spaghetti. However, is it true that we are what we think. We change the mind by changing what we think upon and how we think. We need to learn to think like Christ *“Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus”* (Phil. 2:5).

What is the purpose of the non-conformist’s transformation? *“That you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God”* (12:2b). The will of God is proven to demonstrated to have these three characteristics. First, it is good. This speaks to the quality of God’s will or what He wants. Man does not always want what is God but God always does what is good or right. Next, the Will of God is “acceptable.” Of course God’s will is acceptable to Him and does not have to be proven. But when we sacrifice our bodies and transform our minds we demonstrate to ourselves the God’s way is the best and most pleasing way for us. Finally, the Will of God is “perfect.” “Perfect” is from *telios* meaning complete or a state of completeness. The way a Christian thinks and therefore behaves demonstrates that God’s ways are perfect. Perfect in the sense that no one can add to it to make it better. The will of God for a saint is moral, beneficial or good, pleasing to those who obey it, and without flaw but complete. The transformation demonstrates God’s plan is pleasing and perfect. It is not a conforming to the status quo.

Questions:

1. True False True False The “therefore” answers the question about why Paul has spent the past eleven chapters taking about justification by faith and not the Law of Moses.

2. What are the three commands Paul is giving in our text?
3. What is the motivation for obeying these three commands?
4. What does "*present*" represent in connection with sacrifice?
5. Why does the Christian need to sacrifice his body and not just his soul?
6. List the three characteristics of the sacrifice of the Christian's body to God?
7. In what way is the sacrifice "*reasonable*"?
8. What were "*acceptable*" sacrifices to God in the Law of Moses?
9. How is one "*conformed*" to this age? What does the term "*age*" involve?
10. True False The fashions or worldviews of the age is always changing and never absolute.
11. What does "*transforming*" mean?
12. How is the mind renewed?
13. What the metamorphosis is complete what will the Christian's mind be like?
14. What does the Christians transformation prove or demonstrate about the Will of God?

Application & Discussion:

1. Discuss ways a Christian can and should present their bodies as a living sacrifice to the Lord.
2. What are the differences between being "conformed" and being "transformed"?

Homework: Consider the ways you are being conformed to this world and how you can counteract this by the renewing mind through transformation and presenting your body in service to God.

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Temptation Regulation

No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it. – 1 Corinthians 11:13

No one is immune to temptation. Not even the Son of God (Matt. 4). Since temptations are inevitable, then we are going to have to face them. But we do not have to face them alone. God knows about every temptation we face.

God is in Control of All Temptations

It is true the Devil is the Tempter. However, God is the Temptation Regulator. Satan is powerful and that power should not be underestimated. Satan demonstrated the power he had when he used lightning, tornado, Chaldeans and Sabeans to destroy Job's family and property (Job 1:6-2:7). His power is seen in how he was able to afflict boils upon Job's body from head to toe.

However, it is equally tragic to overestimate the powers of the Devil. Although he had the power to afflict Job in many ways, his power was limited by the authority of God. He could destroy Job's property and family but "Lord said to Satan, 'Behold, all that he has is in your power; only do not lay a hand on his person'" (Job 1:12). After God gave him authority to use his power to afflict Job's person, "the Lord said to Satan, 'Behold, he is in your hand, but spare his life'" (Job 2:6). Satan is by no means invincible nor can he just do anything he wants to whomever he wants and anytime he desires. He could not directly afflict Job without God's permission. Satan could not have hurt a single flea on a hair of Job's oldest camel without the permission of God.

"When God permits Satan to light the furnace, he always keeps his own hand on the thermostat!" (Wiersbe 36). The Devil is hedged in by the providential regulation of God and essentially limited in what he can do in any temptation.

God Has Not Made Unusually Difficult Temptations

There are no temptations that are so unique that only you are tested by them. The temptations you suffer are the same sort of temptations everyone is faced with. Even Jesus faced the same types of temptations as the common man. "For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin" (Heb. 4:15).

God had given man a great power. The power of free will to choose to give into the temptations of the Devil or to reject them. Satan's power cannot overcome anyone's power of choice. The Devil cannot make us do anything. No one can rightly claim today that "the devil made me do it". The late, Flip Wilson popularized this saying years ago in his character, Geraldine. The Devil could not force the fruit down the throats of Adam and Eve. He could not make Job curse God and die. Satan's only power over people is through manipulation and deceit. If he could actually make us do things, he would not need to go to all the trouble of deceiving us. If Satan could make us sin, the temptation process would be superfluous.

God Enables Us to Bear Temptation

No temptation comes to man that man does not have the ability to bear up under. *"No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it"* (1 Cor. 10:13). Many will say they cannot help yielding, because the temptation is too great. Such calls God a liar. God is faithful. He can be trusted. No temptation will be so great that we cannot say "NO!" How? Four ways come to mind. First, in response to our prayers God helps us bear up under temptation. As Jesus faced the trial of crucifixion, He prayed three times for God to remove this from before Him. He submitted to God's Will in prayer. *"Then an angel appeared to Him from heaven, strengthening Him"* (Lk. 22:43). Next, God helps us by providing knowledge and wisdom. *"A wise man is strong, yes, a man of knowledge increases strength"* (Prov. 24:5). Also man is strengthened in tribulations by the grace of God. Paul prayed three times that the throne in the flesh be removed. God told Paul, *"My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong"* (2 Cor. 12:9,10). Finally, men overcome temptation with the help of God's providential care. *"And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose"* (Rom. 8:28).

God Provides a Way of Escape

While living on the Gulf coast in Florida, we were threatened by a few hurricanes. "Evacuation Route" signs were marked to direct residents to safety when a storm threatened. According to 1 Corinthians 10:13 every temptation has an evacuation route. Every temptation has an accompanying escape hatch. There is always an alternative to giving in to temptation. Even when we cannot escape a situation, God always provides a way to escape temptation. Sometimes we do not look for God's way of escape, because we do not really want to escape.

Submarines, ships, and planes are designed with escape hatches. God provided an escape hatch for Cain. *"If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it"* (Gen. 4:7). Satan gives us a door to do evil, God gives us a door to do good. Like a game show contestant who has a choice between door #1 or #2. We cry out to the actress in the thriller to make her escape, "don't open the door, run for it." However, they always open the door. Even Lot had a choice not to pitch his tent toward Sodom and not to live in Sodom.

God provides this way of escape due to His loving care and mercy. He wants us to avoid sin. No one has to sin. Adam and Eve never had to eat of the tree. They could have looked for a way out. Some teach that we are born totally depraved and wholly inclined to evil. This promise of God says that sin is a choice.

Our duty is to look for the escape hatch. Consider what 1 Corinthians 10:13 does not say. It does not say that God will remove the temptation. It does say that you may be able to endure it. The way is not always an easy escape. Sin is often the easy way out of a situation. It is not marked with a brilliantly lighted exit sign. As a man who was often tempted to steal his neighbor's watermelon explained, "When I pass a watermelon patch, I can't keep my mouth from 'watering', but I can run!" Many of us are like Lot's wife. We are constantly looking back at the temptation. Still others are looking too hard for an excuse to give in than looking for a way of escape.

Deacons Smith and Jones, two pillars of the church were working in the hayfield on a Virginia farm. Suddenly, Smith called out excitedly: "What is this we've found in this haystack? Look here a bottle of liquor." Both of them pondered, and Smith said, gravely: "Brother Jones, we had better drink up this before some poor weak brother finds it and falls by the wayside."

God Does Not Allow Us to Be Tempted Beyond Our Ability

It was due to the efforts of Samuel Plimsoll (1824-98), British reformer, that the merchant Shipping Act of 1876 was passed, requiring all ships to bear a mark known as the Plimsoll Mark and indicating the maximum load line on a ship. The Plimsoll Mark with its graduations and figures, may be seen on the bow of ships near the water line as they lie at anchor in a harbor. By this act the Board of Trade of England was empowered to detain any vessel deemed unsafe, and the amount of cargo was restricted. Thus making the long and perilous ocean voyage of those days much safer. Because of his work, Plimsoll became known as the sailor's friend.

In God's sight, each of us has a similar mark, though we may not be able to see it. The trials and temptations we face may seem unbearable, but He knows our limit, His everlasting arms are underneath, and by His grace we can bear them without sinking. God knows our limitations. God has set a limit on the intensity of every temptation. He has set a limit on the intensity of the temptations you will face. He knows how much you can handle. The Heavenly Father wants us to triumph over not being defeated by temptation. We are to do the resisting and escaping. God will do the adjusting on the testing.

God sets the limitations on Satan. Satan knows our weaknesses and will exploit them if permitted. Remember, Satan had to get "permission" to tempt Peter, and he had to demand it. Jesus said, *"Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren"* (Lk. 22:31-32). Before Satan could go after Peter, he first had to check it out with God. We are not at his mercy as some would have us believe. Satan, like all creatures, is ultimately under God's authority. The war for the universe, however, ended long ago. Now the battle is for the possession and corruption of men's souls is on till the end. In both our victories and defeats, God continues to keep the enemy in check.

Our duty in temptation is to resist. Oscar Wilde once said, "The only way to get rid of temptation is to yield to it. I can resist everything but temptation." "I can't help it"; "the devil made me do it"; and "there was no way I could say no" are phrases of defeat. Furthermore, they are simply not true, but as long as you believe you are at the mercy of the devil, you are. Imagine a city whose citizens were convinced that no matter what measures they took, their enemies would eventually overrun their walls. They would probably just surrender without a fight. Ability plus opportunity is responsibility. God knows your ability. God gives the opportunity by way of an escape hatch. It is therefore your responsibility to say no to temptation.

We have the ability and responsibility to resist any temptation. Temptation must be promptly rejected. We have this choice. We can tell him to "get" or we can invite him into our heart and give him a comfortable seat. Concerning our struggle to defeat the Devil we are commanded to "resist him" (1 Peter 5:9). This is the same word used in James 4:7: *"therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you."* This means to stand one's ground unwaveringly during attack, so as not to give ground but constantly give resistance. When faced with a possible lion attack do not play dead. That might work with a grizzly bear but not a lion. Do not run away this will incite the lion to give chase. James says if you resist he will flee. Most information about dealing with a lion attack encourages the would be victim to hold their ground and fight back with whatever is at hand. The devil is like any bully and retreats when he is bravely resisted. Do not give him an opportunity to attack. Lion's will go for the throat or the back of the neck. So do not run or fall down but stand and fight.

The Bible tells us to retreat from temptation. Joseph fled from Potiphar's wife (Gen. 39:12). We are commanded to *"flee also youthful lust"* (2 Tim. 2:22); *"flee fornication"* (1 Cor. 6:18); and *"flee from idolatry"* (1 Cor. 10:14b). We are to look for a way of escape (1 Cor. 10:13). Sometimes, "The surest protection against temptation is cowardice" (Mark Twain). "Show it a fine pair of heels. And run for it" (Shakespeare, Henry IV). Many cannot overcome, because they are not looking for a way out. The town drunk was converted to Christ in a some western town. He stopped drinking, but kept hitching his horse up at the hitching post in front of the saloon. Soon he was back to his old habits and resumed his role as the town drunk. Sometimes running from temptation is running for your life.

God Knows How to Deliver Us from Temptation

Still another promise of God is that He knows how to deliver us from temptation. God *“did not spare the ancient world, but saved Noah, one of eight people, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood on the world of the ungodly; and turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, condemned them to destruction, making them an example to those who afterward would live ungodly; and delivered righteous Lot, who was oppressed by the filthy conduct of the wicked (for that righteous man, dwelling among them, tormented his righteous soul from day to day by seeing and hearing their lawless deeds)-- then the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment,”* (2 Peter 2:5-9).

In the context of 2 Peter 2, the writer speaks of Noah and Lot, who were in dire situations and endured faithfully because of the Lord's help. Daniel was delivered out of the mouth of lions. Note that deliverance is not avoidance. If God had never put the testing tree in the Garden in the first place man would have never been tempted to sin. Sometimes we wish that God would bulldoze all the testing trees down in the forest of life, but that would not be in our best interest. God even had Paul endure *“the thorn in His flesh”* because it was better for Paul to endure the trial than to be completely delivered from it (2 Cor. 12:7-10).

God has not saved us from sin and translated us into his Kingdom of light from the kingdom of darkness just to abandon us to the attacks of the Devil. *“But the Lord is faithful, who will establish you and guard you from the evil one. And we have confidence in the Lord concerning you, both that you do and will do the things we command you. Now may the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God and into the patience of Christ”* (2 Thess. 3:3-5). The opposition to the Gospel is ultimately the Devil. God is able to help the saints fight off Satan. They could put their trust in Him because He has been able to defeat the Devil even while being tempted in the flesh (Matt. 4:1-11). With God's help every Christian can be strong enough to withstand the attacks of the Devil (Eph. 6:10-18) and they will be well protected by God who will not allow any saints to be tempted and tested beyond what they are able to handle.

Years ago when a city state was faced with the threat of superior forces of another city, they were about to give up hope. One man came forth with a plan. It seems the horses for their enemy were trained to dance and prance when a certain marching tune was played. Thus, they assembled a band to play the tune while the rest of their men prepared an ambush. The enemy was easily defeated. Those who do not give up and surrender to the forces of Satan will be delivered by the Lord.

The Psalmist wrote, *“The angel of the Lord encamps all around those who fear Him, and delivers them. Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good; Blessed is the man who trusts in Him”* (Ps. 34:7,8).

Questions:

1. True False A Christian can live so as to avoid all temptation.
2. What did the Devil have to do before he could tempt Job?
3. True False God is aware of and in control of every temptation.
4. Was Jesus tempted? Why?

5. Can the Devil make us give into temptation? Explain.
6. How can a Christian have strength to say "NO" to temptation?
7. Did God give Cain a way of escape? What was it?
8. True False The way of escape is always easy to find in every temptation.
9. God sets limits on temptation based on...?
10. How did Joseph resist the advances of Potiphar's wife?

Application & Discussion:

1. How did God deliver the follow?
 - Daniel in the Lion's Den
 - Lot and family
 - Paul with the thorn in his flesh.
 - Hezekiah in siege of Jerusalem
 - Daniel's three friends and the "burning fiery furnace".
2. What were possible ways of escape for those who gave into temptation?
 - ◆ Judas' betrayal
 - ◆ Peter's denial
 - ◆ David's adultery

Homework: Meditate about your own failures to resist temptations from your past and consider the way of escape you could have taken.

The Gospel in Fifteen Words

For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. – 2 Corinthians 5:21

Ever since the genesis of sin in the Garden of Eden, mankind has been plagued by death. Genesis chapter five is the “...and he died” chapter (Gen. 5:8,11,14,17,20,27,31). There have been many plagues upon mankind: the Spanish influenza outbreak following the First World War; the Black Death in the middle ages which may have claimed between 35% to 45% of the population of Europe. The Tenth Plague upon Egypt was the most devastating with the loss of the first born. However, there is a “Plague of plagues” or sin. It is 100 percent fatal. When Adam and Eve sinned it caused physical and spiritual death as well. There is no man-made cure and there is no such thing as immunity (Rom. 3:23).

Before exploring the text, it is good to remember that every great verse of the Bible does not stand alone. Each text must be studied and applied with regard to the context. In this case chapter five begins with the hope and promise of a better new body in the afterlife. This thought was begun by Paul and the end of chapter four. In verse one of chapter five, Paul claims the next body is the best. It is not like an earthly tent, but a house built by God. The next life is perfect (5:2-4). The next existence fulfills God’s purpose (5:5). And the next dwelling place for man’s soul is with the Lord (5:6-8). Therefore, “*we are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord*” (5:8). However, Paul reminds the Corinthians that there is something which must come before they are able to dwell with the Lord in eternity. They must properly prepare for God’s Judgment (5:9-11). First, by aiming to please God (5:9). Next, by appearing before God to be judged by Christ (5:10). This is why Paul must warn all men of the terror of the Lord (5:11a). The Corinthians should not be terrorized by this prospect, since they are assured of being well known by God (5:11b).

It is at this point in the chapter that Paul breaks away from death and Judgment and mentions the integrity of His ministry (5:12-16). They are known of God and so is He. With Paul there is no commendation of self (5:12); no confidence in his intellect (5:13); no continued living for self (5:14,15) and no carnal perceptive on Christ (5:16).

In verse seventeen Paul is back to talking about newness in Christ. “*Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.*” Sin destroyed God’s perfect creation. Now there is a need for a new creation in Christ. It is starting over with a brand new life. Paul tells us that reconciliation to God is for “*anyone*” who “*is in Christ*” and thus resulting in them being “*a new creation.*” “*Christians are not reformed, rehabilitated or reeducated - they are recreated...Believers are not merely turning over a new leaf; they are beginning a new life under a new Master.*” (Life Application Bible Comm. p. 355). A new life can only come after “*old things have passed away.*” The old man of sin is crucified, slavery to sin ended, sin is washed away, and the old garments of sin have been put off. “*...behold, all things have become new.*” This does not mean new physically or in regard to earthly relationships etc. “*All things*” must be understood in its context and in the light of other passages. There are many ways the reconciled former sinner has newness of life. He has a new birth (John 3:5). This results in a new Father, new family with brothers and sisters, and a new hope of an inheritance (Tit. 1:2). He has a new vocation (Eph. 4:1-11). There is the New Testament (Heb. 8:8); new clothes (Eph. 6:18-17); new name (Acts 11:26); new citizenship – Heaven; new Master; a new song, (Rev. 5:9-12); and a new destiny.

Paul continues from this pivotal verse to explain more about the sinner's reconciliation to God (5:18-21). The source of reconciliation: *"now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself"* (5:18a). The means of reconciliation is *"through Jesus Christ"* (5:18b). And He *"has given us the ministry of reconciliation"* (5:19a). There is the mercy of reconciliation: *"not imputing their trespasses to them"* (5:19b) which with through *"the word of reconciliation"* (5:19c). Thus in our new life we are ambassadors of reconciliation (5:20a). Because of the new life through reconciliation Paul pleads all to *"be reconciled to God"* (5:20b). And finally, we come to the text which explains the plan of reconciliation in fifteen words: *"For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him"* (5:21).

Sin brings death, because it has separated man from God: the source of all life. A means of removing sin for the purpose of reconciliation is the remedy for this plague. 2 Corinthians 5:21 represents in a single verse consisting of fifteen Greek words. It is the Gospel or Good News of Reconciliation. It has been called "the single key verse of the entire Bible" (Jerry Bridges, The Great Exchange).

The Bestower

The antecedent to the word *"He"* is back in verse twenty: *"God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation."*

This reconciliation had to be initiated by God. The word *"made"* shows Divine intervention by the sending of Jesus. *"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"* (John 3:16). *"But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us"* (Rom. 5:8). Jesus did not go to the cross by mistake or merely by the hands and plotting of the Jewish leadership, betrayal by Judas or the ruling of Pilate. God took the first step in reconciliation by sending Jesus to the cross. Peter preached on Pentecost that Jesus *"being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death"* (Acts 2:23).

God could not let His creation, made in His image, be doomed to suffer in sin without hope. After all, God is love. He could not overlook sin, because He is Just and Holy. Man could not pay for his sin with his own blood, because all men have sinned and are worthy the wages of sin which is death, that is the shedding of their blood for they have sinned (Rom. 6:23).

The Blood

Sin required the shedding of blood or death. Animal sacrifices could not remove sin (Heb. 10:4). Animals cannot sin. Man can sin and all have sinned. Therefore God had to make Jesus (*"Him"*) a substitute for sinful man. Just one catch, Jesus had to be sinless to be our alternate. To die for sinners He had to be sinless. To die for men He had to become a man. Only a man could die for other men. Jesus thus came to earth as a human to live a perfect life. Jesus challenged His enemies, *"which of you convicts Me of sin? And if I tell the truth, why do you not believe Me?"* (John 8:46). Others who knew Jesus declared His innocence. Pilate said, *"I find no fault in this Man"* (Luke 23:4). The penitent thief next to Jesus on the cross said, *"for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this Man has done nothing wrong"* (Luke 23:4). Peter described Jesus' sinless sacrifice: *"but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot...Who committed no sin, nor was deceit found in His mouth"* (1 Peter 1:19;2:22). The apostle John wrote, *"and you know that He was manifested to take away our sins, and in Him there is no sin"* (1 John 3:5). One who stood in no need of reconciliation would reconcile sinners to God through His blood.

Jesus was made or created *"to be sin for us."* This does not mean He was made a sinner or given the guilt of another man's sin. He was chosen to be the unblemished sacrificial lamb for sinful man. Like an innocent little lamb Jesus experienced the consequences of the sins of man without ever committing a single sin. *"Who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness—by whose stripes you were healed"* (1 Peter 2:24).

The Blessed

The “us” and “we” in the verse also go back to verse twenty to find its antecedent in “ambassadors for Christ” in verse 20. In verse seventeen the “us” and “we” are the new creatures in Christ and those who are reconciled to God in verse eighteen. Jesus shed His blood for the blessed. Blessed with reconciliation to God. As a sinner all men were on death row. *“There is none righteous, no, not one...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God”* (Rom. 3:10,23). All men thus awaited the same punishment. *“For the wages of sin is death”* (Rom. 6:23). Just as Jesus was a substitute for condemned insurrectionist and murderer named Jesus Barabbas, so He took our place on death row. Jesus died the death that Barabbas should have died. So He died the death for all sinners.

This sacrifice of the Son of God/Son of man was once for all time never to be repeated. Countless millions of sacrificial animals shed their blood under the Old Testament. With the death of one sinless man that all ended.

The Blessing

The phrase “so that” declares God’s purpose in making Christ our sacrifice for sin. It is forgiveness of sin by which the path to reconciliation to God is open. The removal of the sin that hindered man’s friendship with God is seen throughout the many metaphors of forgiveness. *“Indeed it was for my own peace that I had great bitterness; but You have lovingly delivered my soul from the pit of corruption, for You have cast all my sins behind Your back”* (Is. 38:17). In Isaiah 44:22 God says, *“I have blotted out, like a thick cloud, your transgressions, and like a cloud, your sins. Return to Me, for I have redeemed you.”* The Psalmist says of God’s forgiveness, *“As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us”* (Psalm 103:12). Micah 7:19 says God *“will cast all our sins Into the depths of the sea.”*

Does this mean all men automatically receive the blessing of reconciliation through the blood of Christ? The words “*might become*” shows there is the potential for all to be reconciled. God has done His part in reconciliation. Man through faithful obedience must do his part. This includes hearing the Gospel message (Rom. 10:17). and believing that Jesus is the Son of God who was raised from the dead and being willing to confess that belief before men (Rom. 10:9,10). Furthermore, it includes repenting and being baptized for the forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38). Potentially all men can be saved through Jesus Christ, but not all will be saved (Matt. 7:13,14; 21-23).

The end product of Christ being made sin is so that we are made righteousness. Righteousness is from God not man. Jesus said, *“For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven”* (Matt. 5:20).

We cannot make ourselves justified or right before God without Jesus. Therefore, the place of this righteousness is “in Him” or Jesus. Paul wrote, *“for if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life”* (Rom. 5:10). It is in Christ that is found all spiritual blessings (Eph. 1:3) including reconciliation.

Salvation may not have cost the sinner his blood. But salvation is a free gift of God by His grace. However, salvation was not cheap. It cost God His Son and the Son His life. This God did for us. *“Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered”* (Psalm 32:1).

Questions:

1. Why is sin the great plague of all time?
2. Why is the context of a text so important?

3. Why is it more pleasing to be absent from the body?
4. What must transpire before the Corinthians are going to dwell in eternity with the Lord in their new body?
5. What for these may up the defense of the integrity of Paul's ministry?
6. Why all things have had to passed away?
7. What are some new things in Christ?
8. What is the source of our reconciliation?
9. How did God take the first steps of reconciliation with man?
10. Why did Jesus have to be a substitute sacrifice for man's sins?
11. List verses showing Jesus was sinless?
12. What do we have in common with Jesus Barabbas?

13. What is man's part in reconciliation?

Application & Discussion:

1. What are some other things that are made new in reconciliation to God through Christ?

2. Why are not all men being reconciled to God?

Homework: Take this verse and share the Gospel with others who need to be reconciled to God and become new creatures.

“Work Out Your Own Salvation”

Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.

– Philippians 2:12,13

Is salvation all God's doing, all the believer's doing or a combination of both? Is God alone active in the pursuit of the salvation of man's soul? Or are there things God expects man to do in seeking salvation. One theologian argued, “no one does come to God until God reaches down by grace...Even if every generation of mankind and every city and village on earth had a John the Baptist to point to Jesus Christ and to call us to him, apart from the supernatural work of God in human hearts no one would come.” However Philippians 2:12,13 teaches that we are partners with God in pursuit of our personal salvation from sin. It shows that both God and sinner function in perfect harmony by fulfilling their respective parts in the Scheme of Redemption.

Man's Part in Salvation

■ **Following Christ's Example**

While studying the Bible whenever one comes across “*therefore*” they need to stop and ask what the “*therefore*” is there for. Paul begins verse twelve with “*therefore*”. It refers back to the example of Jesus Christ in verses five and eight: “*Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, ...He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.*” Christ obeyed, therefore we must also obey. Christ both humbled Himself and became obedient even to the point of death by crucifixion. God therefore exalted Him.

■ **With Brotherly Love**

Paul begins with one of his standard expressions of endearment toward the brethren at Philippi calling them “*my beloved,*” (2:12b). Affectionately he calls upon them to remember Christ's example and their past obedience to Him.

■ **Continual Obedience**

As they have obeyed God in the past, they must continue to do so in the present: “*as you have always obeyed*” (2:12c). They had started a good habit and needed to continue in it. The Greek term for “*obeyed*” is *hupakouo*. This verb is made up from the preposition *hupo* and the verb *akouo* (from which is derived the English word for “acoustics”). It demands them to listen up to what God commands with a view to acting upon His commands. They were in the habit of doing this. In fact *hupakous* was necessary to be saved from eternal punishment (2 Th. 1:8) and be saved from sin (cf. Rom. 6:17; 1 Pet. 1:2). Are you still listening to God's commandments?

■ **Sincere Obedience**

Paul knew that they were listening to God with sincere obedience because they were obedient “*not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence*” (2:12d). Paul's future was uncertain, and there was no guarantee that he would see them again. Earlier he told them, “*only let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of your affairs, that you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel*” (Phil.

1:27). He could be freed from prison shortly or be executed.

Paul knew all too well that there were different motives for obedience. There are those who obey only in the presence of others. They do so out of "eye-service" (Col 3:22). Those who have a genuine faith obey God whether they are with others or alone. Obedience is done to please God. Paul had taught them the Gospel and expected them to be obedient whether present with them or absent. Their faith had to grow to the point that they were not dependent upon Paul's presence for their continued faithfulness. The same is true of a child. Parents need to be present when the child is young to ensure they are listening. However, parents hope their children will one day mature to the point they will no longer have to keep such a close eye on them.

■ **On-going Faithfulness**

Salvation has three time dimensions; past, present and future. There was the time when one was saved at the point of believing and being baptized (Mark 16:16). This salvation was in the past. There is the need to be saved in connection to the Day of the Lord's return (1 Cor. 5:5; 3:15; Rom. 13:11; 1 Thess. 5:9). Peter put it this way: *"receiving the end of your faith—the salvation of your souls"* (1 Peter 1:9). This is eternal salvation which is coming in the future. But between the time one was saved from their sins and was born again and the time Christ comes back to take us to Heaven for our eternal salvation we must make sure we are saved in the present time. *"And do this, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed"* (Romans 13:11). Paul is telling them to continue to daily *"work out your own salvation"* (2:12e). Not *"work for your own salvation"* as if salvation were a matter of doing something to earn it. Salvation is a gift given by the grace of God. It is the unmerited favor given. However, salvation initially comes with conditions and with continued obligations and effort on the receiver's part. If someone were to give you a field with diamonds it would be of incalculable worth. However, you could not benefit from the riches of that gift unless you worked in the field recovering them. To *"work out"* means to *"keep on working out to completion, to ultimate fulfillment."* Continued obedience is a daily requirement. Just because one was saved yesterday and hopes to be saved in eternity means he must obey today.

■ **Personally Responsible**

No one can be saved for us. It is our *"own salvation"* (2:12f). At the time of the writing of this letter to the Philippians, they already possessed salvation. However, baptism is not the end point, but the beginning point of being saved. Every Christian must personally work out his own salvation. Even the apostle Paul could not listen to God with a view to save them. Each Christian has to do their own listening and obeying.

■ **Reverently & Seriously**

Paul explains the manner in which they are to work out their salvation: *"with fear and trembling"* (2:12g). It is the Greek term *phobos* which is translated "fear". Our English word "phobia" finds its origins in this term. This fear is in reference to reverence of the Lord. The *"fear of the Lord"* is the beginning of knowledge and will cause one to hate evil as well as prompts one to depart from evil (Prov. 1:7; 8:13; 16:6). *"Trembling"* is from *tromos* which refers to shaking and is the word from which the English word "tremor" is derived. It describes one's physical response to having fear. These two show an abandonment of all complacency about one's salvation. Taking both God and the condition of their soul very seriously.

Since this verse clearly shows the possibility of a Christian failing to remain faithful and maintain salvation, it goes against the doctrine of Calvinism. Calvin believed *"once saved, always saved"*. Christians can fall from grace. They can neglect their salvation and be lost. If they can never lose this salvation why the need for *"fear and trembling"*? Why trouble with repentance of sin and prayer for forgiveness? Salvation is essential for making it to Heaven and we need to take our salvation very seriously. Next, we will look at how seriously God took the salvation of man in doing His part.

God's Part in Salvation

In Philippians 2:12 is seen man's part in salvation. He is to begin by listening God with continued obedience while following Christ's example of humble, sincere and on-going faithfulness. One must take personal responsibility for their own soul's salvation and do so with reverence and seriousness. Verse thirteen now speaks of God's role in man's salvation.

- **Indwelling**

Verse thirteen supplies a reason for the exhortation of verse twelve: *"for it is God who works in you"* (2:13a). Paul is reminding them that salvation is not attained by man's efforts or on the merit of his goodness. The true God is not like the distant, indifferent and impersonal pagan gods. In the Bible He is described with all the aspects of a friendly and loving person. *"So the Lord spoke to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend"* (Ex. 33:11). David understood the Lord's continual presence with him (Ps. 23).

God is so close to us that He is said to dwell in the saints. *"Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?"* (1 Cor. 3:16). *"Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own?"* (1 Cor. 6:19). *"And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: 'I will dwell in them And walk among them. I will be their God, And they shall be My people'"* (2 Cor. 6:16). God is always be there to help us along. God is our "co-pilot" or better yet our wing-man.

- **Energizing**

God does not just dwell in us but He *"works in you"* (2:13b). Paul makes a play on words by using the word *"work"* twice. We work out and God works in us for our salvation. This is not said in support of the Calvinist's doctrine of "irresistible grace." That is God works directly by way of the Holy Spirit upon the heart of the sinner to "force" him to believe and be saved by God's grace. Does God work directly upon the human heart or does He work through such agency as the revealed Word? Man has the free-will to listen and obey or reject God offer of salvation.

Man does needs God's help for he cannot be saved without Him. God wants man to do His part and He is going to help the sinner or energize him through the Word. Paul wrote, *"to this end I also labor, striving according to His working which works in me mightily"* (Col. 1:29).

How does God work in us? Paul did not find it necessary to explain how. Many things come into play, such as, various human agents (2 Cor. 1:3-7); answering prayers (Acts 6:4); sufferings (1 Pet. 4:12-19) and the Word. *"For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, because when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe"* (1 Thess. 2:13). *"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"* (Rom. 1:16). God is like the energizing bunny in that He is the power source in every saint. After all, *"work"* here is from the Greek *energeo* from which we get the term "energy". Remember, an electric razor is not going to cut whiskers without having a power source.

- **Motivating Us**

Because God is working, we are working. God wants to have the *"will"* (2:13c) to work. How does God motivate us to get busy? The love of Christ is a force which causes us to will to do His will. God is holy and this motivates men to strive to be holy. And believe it or not the fear of going to hell motivates man to reject the *"wages of sin"* which is death (Rom. 6:23) and in the end comes the second death (Rev. 21:8). *"O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?"* (Rom. 7:24).

- **Enabling Us**

God just does not want man to be motivated to work but to actually get to work. He enables us to *"both to will and to do"* (2:13d). The will to do must precede the doing. In Nehemiah's day the walls of Jerusalem were rebuilt in the mere fifty-two days, because the people had a mind or will to do the work. A proper motivation results in godly work. Man and God are a team when it comes to working out an individual's salvation. God is the Husbandman who tends the branches, but it is up to us whether or not

we are willing to bare fruit. Because apart from an abiding relationship with Christ there can be no fruitfulness (John 15:4-7). *“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”* (1 Cor. 15:58).

- **Pleasing**

Man's salvation gives God *“His good pleasure”* (2:13e). Man needs to be motivated to work. What is God's motivation to working out our salvation? The great satisfaction and joy He recedes from seeing His Children on the path back to be home with Him in Heaven. All saints need to live to bring pleasure to our God. *“That you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God”* (Colossians 1:10). *God began to work toward our salvation from eternity and began to do so individually when we first were born again. Paul wants them to be reassured “that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ”* (Phil. 1:6). The *“day of Jesus Christ”* is the Second Coming. God is waiting to send Christ back but is waiting to do so because He wants all men to be saved. *“The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance”* (2 Peter 3:9). No man can save himself. He cannot work to earn salvation. Once the sinner is saved by grace through faith, he must continue to work and walk according to the will of God for his continued and future salvation. *“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them”* (Eph. 2:8-10). Even free gifts must be kept safe or be lost. God and man work together to make sure that was given as a gift by grace is not lost.

Noah found grace before God. He was not save by grace alone. He still had to build the ark and get on the ark to be saved. The Israelites were saved by God in the parting of the Red Sea. God did His part in parting the waters but they had to do their part by crossing over to the other side to find salvation from Egyptian bondage (Ex.14:13-14;15-16). Naaman was cured by God of his leprosy. However, he was not saved from this terminal disease until he listen to Elisha the Prophet and dipped seven times in the waters of the river Jordan. When the man born blind washed in the pool of Siloam (John 9:1-12), that did not make him his own healer. Jesus alone had the power to heal not the water. However, if the blind man had not listened to Jesus and washed in the pool he would not have been saved from blindness. On the Day of Pentecost Peter preached a sermon of condemnation on those Jews present. They were guilty of crucifying the Son of God. Being *“pricked in their heart”* and asked Peter *“what shall we do?”* They showed faith but were not forgiven until they *“gladly received his word and were baptized”* (Acts 2:41). They were not saved by the waters of baptism any more than Noah, the Israelites, Naaman or the blind man were saved by the water. But all of them had to do their part in *“working out their own salvation”*!

Questions:

1. True False Apart from the supernatural work of God in human hearts no one would come to God for salvation.
2. What does the word *“therefore”* reference in our text?
3. Where was Paul at when he wrote our text?

4. Explain the three time dimensions of salvation? Which one is under consideration in our text?
5. True False To fulfill conditions of salvation is the same as working to earn salvation.
6. What does "*own salvation*" imply?
7. In what manner are the saved to work out their salvation?
8. Does God work directly upon the human heart or does He work through such agency as the revealed Word? Explain.
9. How does God motivate us to continue to work out our salvation?
10. How do we please God?
11. What was Noah and Naaman's part in working out their salvation?

Application & Discussion:

1. How does this passage negate the five points of Calvinism?
2. List God's part in your initial salvaiton from sin and the conditions you had to work out to be saved.

Homework: Today and every day continue to do your part in working out your salvation while being grateful to God for always doing His part.

Inspired Word of God

16 All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, 17 that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work. – 2 Timothy 3:16-17

On books are often found critics' appraisal of the author's book. To help sell the book publishers will add these. Their opinions are often found on the dust covers in what is called the blurb. They will state such thing as: "a must read for everyone" or "the author's best work to date!" or "Brilliant!" or "I would give this six stars out of five" or "a sure-fire best-seller". Paul's description of Scriptures tells of the great value of God's book, the Bible. It is a best seller and most read book of all time.

Scriptures are Inspired

The Greek word translated "*inspiration*" comes from a compound word *theopneustos* which literally means "God-breathed." The Greek term *pneuma* gives us the terms "pneumonia" and "pneumatic." It is the idea of wind or air moving something. Peter explains, "*for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit*" (2 Peter 1:21). God needed to reveal His Will from His eternal mind to the minds of men so they could read and comprehend. This was done with the Holy Spirit to divinely superintended men in accurately recording the very words God wished. Revelation involves the communication of truth from God to man, and inspiration involved the recording of that truth. No prophecy of Scripture is a matter of origination in one's own mind. No message of Scripture comes out of any human source. The Holy Spirit revealed God's mind and enabled the Apostles and prophets to speak and write using their own language and vocabulary.

Scripture is God speaking through the mouths of His prophets. He told Moses, "*now therefore, go, and I will be with your mouth and teach you what you shall say*" (Exodus 4:12). Jeremiah explained the process. "*the Lord said to me: 'Do not say, 'I am a youth,' For you shall go to all to whom I send you, And whatever I command you, you shall speak....Then the Lord put forth His hand and touched my mouth, and the Lord said to me: 'Behold, I have put My words in your mouth'*" (Jeremiah 1:7,9). God told Ezekiel, "*Son of man, go to the house of Israel and speak with My words to them.... Moreover He said to me: 'Son of man, receive into your heart all My words that I speak to you, and hear with your ears. And go, get to the captives, to the children of your people, and speak to them and tell them, 'Thus says the Lord God,' whether they hear, or whether they refuse'*" (Ezekiel 3:4,10-11).

God also inspired men to write down His will word for word. Jesus told John, "*I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last,*" and, "*What you see, write in a book and send it to the seven churches*" (Rev. 1:11).

Since the Bible has as its author the all-knowing and eternal God, it must be with out error, that is, infallible. When the Bible speaks of history, science, geography, etc. it is accurate. The Bible is not filled with errors. Every day archeologists and historians are uncovering more and more evidence that the Bible is historically accurate. Every time a spade of an archaeologist digs into the earth it turns up evidence supporting the Bible. Could all of this been fabricated by Biblical writers? The evidence from archaeology says NO! If the Bible is so accurate historically how much more is it in guiding man spiritually.

The Bible demonstrates accurate scientific foreknowledge about static electricity (Jer. 10:13); air having weight (Job 28:25); stars are said to give off signals indicating radio astronomy (Job 38:7); light is a particle for it has mass, a photon (Job 38:19); light can be split up into component colors (Job 38:24); lighting and thunder are related (Job 38:25); Arcturus and other stars move through space (Job 38:32); plants use sunlight to manufacture food (Heb. 11:3); etc.

The Bible's scientific accuracy demands an explanation. Not only are there no contradictions between true Biblical doctrines and genuine scientific teaching, the Bible is pre-scientific. It runs ahead of the scientists. The fact is, the same God who created this universe is the same God who wrote the Bible. God superintended the writing of the Bible to keep it from making scientific mistakes. Although other books written ages ago contained out-dated facts about science, the Bible is never obsolete. It is a book which is new and modern, even though it is old and ancient. Nature's Laws (which science is just now discovering) has the same author as the Bible, therefore, the two "books" cannot be contradictory.

The scriptures are holy scriptures. They came from God who is Holy. Paul describes the writings of the prophets as "*the Holy Scriptures*" (Rom. 1: 2). No other book is holy or sacred.

Scriptures are Completely Inspired

Paul says that "*all*" not "*some*" scripture comes from the very spirit or breath of God. This dispels the notion that only parts of the Bible are inspired. The Psalmist wrote, "*The entirety of Your word is truth, And every one of Your righteous judgments endures forever*" (Ps. 119:160).

Is Paul saying that the Old Testament scriptures are inspired or could this include the New Testament as well? Note, Paul does use the same Greek terms as in verse fifteen, instead he uses the Greek term *graphe*. It means "writings" (plural). Paul evidently believed that both Old and New Testaments were inspired writings *graphe*. He wrote, "*For the Scripture says, 'You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain,' and, 'The laborer is worthy of his wages'*" (1 Tim 5:18). He first quotes from the Old Testament (Deut. 25:4) and then he quotes Jesus from the New Testament (Luke 10:7). Peter recognized the writings of Paul as inspired scripture. He wrote "*as also our beloved brother Paul, ... has written to you, as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures*" (2 Peter 3:15-16). Jude quotes Peter and calls his Scripture (Jude 17-18). Jesus said, "*These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me*" (Luke 24:44). The scriptures include all that Moses wrote as well as the Prophets and the Psalms. The New Testament writers, about 320 direct quotations of the Old Testament in the New Testament, about 1,000 inferences. The New Testament writers clearly believe the Old Testament was inspired. From Genesis to Revelation it is all the Words of God.

Scriptures are Profitable

The Greek word for "*profitable*" is *ophelimos*, meaning sufficient or beneficial. This speaks to the purpose and potential of God's Word. It is so complete that it has been "*once for all delivered to the saints*" (Jude 3) just as Christ was "*once for all*" sacrificed for man's sins. To say there is need for more scriptures would be equivalent to someone demanding an additional sacrifice for man's sin. The Latter Day Saints will argue that they need the Book of Mormon due to the inefficiency of the Bible. Yet, the Bible as it exists today in sixty-six books needs no additions. John gave a stern warning to anyone adding to the Word (Rev. 22:18,19).

The Psalmist recognized the value of God's Word in that it gave the reader more wisdom than his teachers and the aged. "*I have more understanding than all my teachers, For Your testimonies are my meditation. I understand more than the ancients, Because I keep Your precepts*" (Psalm 119:99 - 100). The Psalmist said that the Word of God is "*more to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much*

fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb" (Psalms 19:10). The reasons why were given as *"The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple; the statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes; the fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever; the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether"* (Psalm 19:7-9).

First, the inspired writings of God are profitable for *"doctrine"* or teaching. This is not the action of instructing others, but the content of what is to be taught, the body of truth which is to be taught. All the doctrines need for man is found in the Bible. Therefore, any additional doctrine is from man and is not inspired. The Word contains the basic Truths which one is to learn. The Bible contains information which cannot be found elsewhere. The Bible contains all the facts and truths essential for our knowledge. To be sure there will be many things not found in the pages of the Bible that the reader will have questions about. But *"the secret things belong to the Lord our God, but those things which are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law"* (Deut. 29:29)

Second, the Bible is profitable for *"reproof"* from the Greek *elegchon*. meaning "conviction" The verb is defined as "to rebuke another with such effectual wielding of the victorious arms of truth, as to bring him, if not always to a confession, yet at least to a conviction of his sin" (Trench). The idea is to convict man of his wrong whether it be his doctrine or his morals. Logically, learning true, inspired teaching or doctrine must precede convicting one that he is wrong. Peter preached about Jesus and Messianic prophecies, then he reproved the Jews. Peter preached, *"Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ"* (Acts 2:36). Nathan convicted David of adultery and murder (2 Samuel 12). The Bible was written to expose the sins in the life of the reader. *"Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness"* (1 John 3:4).

Once a man is convinced that he is wrong he will need to learn how to correct his situation. After all, it is near impossible to teach someone the need to make correction in their lives until they first come to the conviction they are wrong. The Greek word for *"correction"* is only found here in the New Testament. It is used of setting upright that which has been overturned. It is a restoration or reparation from sinfulness and false teaching.

Finally, once a sinner or error has been corrected comes the continued need for *"instruction in righteousness."* The Greek word translated here as *"instruction"* means "training, correcting" which is received by a child from a parent or teacher (see Eph 6:4; Heb. 12:5f). Derived from *paideia* is "the English word 'pedagogy'" which "is based on the idea of guiding a child to adulthood" (Swindoll 220). According Jamison, Fausset, and Brown the phrase could be rendered "instruction which is in righteousness." Thayer defines it as "the state of him who is such as he ought to be, righteousness; the condition acceptable to God...integrity, virtue, purity of life, unrighteous, correctness in thinking, feeling, acting." To keep the student of the Bible from falling back into sin or falling for future errors in doctrine, he will need the discipline and training to keep him righteous. The Psalmist prayed, *"Keep back Your servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me. Then I shall be blameless, And I shall be innocent of great transgression"* (Psalm 19:13).

These four benefits of God's inspired writings are best summed up by Warren Weirsbe, the scriptures *"are profitable for doctrine (what is right), for reproof (What is not right), for correction (how to get right), and for instruction in righteousness (how to stay right)"* (253).

Scriptures Make Perfect

The phrase *"man of God"* is found in 1 Timothy 6:11 in reference to Timothy serving as an evangelist at Ephesus. A man of God must be a man of the Book.

The result of the sufficient teaching, beneficial reproof, competent correction, and useful instruction in righteousness is making the servant of God *"complete."* The term means one who is not perfect in the sense of either moral or doctrinal perfection (although every Christian should strive for such)

but instead means one who is useful because of being in a fit condition for service in God's Kingdom.

Scriptures Equip

The second benefit of the inspired Word is that Christians are *"thoroughly equipped."* Without the benefit of the Scriptures, a Christian's life is incomplete, lacking, and defunct. God does not send His soldiers out into battle without all the equipment they need to advance and survive the wiles of the devil (Eph. 6:10f). No good work exists which God has not informed and prepared man for in His inspired Word. Every righteous work can be fulfilled by the Christian well furnished with the Truth from God in his heart and in his mind. No one on earth is better qualified to do God's Work than the Christian who knows his Bible.

"There is, that whatever good work the man of God desires to perform, or however perfect he aims to be, he will find no deficiency in the Scriptures, but will find there the most ample instructions that he needs" (Barnes, p. 242). Peter wrote, *"His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue"* (2 Peter 1:3). Even the Old Testament scriptures are helpful to the New Testament Christian. *"For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope"* (Rom. 15:4). The sufficiency of the Scriptures provides us with every single good work that there is no need to add to the list. The Bible not only is comprehensive of all good works, it can equip us to fulfill each and every one.

The mutineers of the H.M.S. Bounty knew that if they were captured by the British Royal Navy, they would have been hung for their crimes. So, they set sail and by chance landed on a remote South Pacific island in the early part of the nineteenth century. The island of Pitcairn was not marked correctly on the maps of the day. So this band of criminals were able to escape justice.

The mutineers had some native women with them. Therefore, the population started to increase. But soon the men started killing each other until there was only one left. His name was Alexander Smith. After he was the only man left alive, he started reading his Bible that had been given to him by his mother. When the community on Pitcairn island was visited a few generations later, it was found to have churches but no jails because there was no crime. The teachings of the Bible had equipped them to live godly and harmonious lives for generations.

Questions:

1. What is the literal meaning of the term *"inspiration"*?
2. Explain how the prophets were moved by the Holy Spirit in writing the Bible?
3. List some prophets who claimed to be mouth pieces for God's revealed word.

4. Why should the Bible NOT be filled with errors in history or science?
5. How would you explain the scientific foreknowledge of Scripture.
6. What does the phrase "holy scriptures" indicate?
7. What parts of the Bible are inspired?
8. Did Paul and Peter teach that the New Testament was inspired? Explain.
9. True False The Latter Day Saints will argue that they need the Book of Mormon due to the inefficiency of the Bible.
10. Make a list of all the good works a Christian must do which are not found in the Bible.
11. List some example of those in the Bible and from day to day life whose lives were transformed by the inspired Word of God.
12. Matching:

_____ Doctrine	a. How to get right
_____ Reproof	b. How to stay right
_____ Correction	c. What is not right
_____ Instruction	d. What is right

13. What are the two benefits of the inspired Word of God?

Application & Discussion:

1. Does the study of the Old Testament have any value for the New Testament Christian? Explain.
2. A man has been taught that baptism comes after salvation and he was saved at the point of faith. Demonstrate what could be shown him from the Word's

Inspired teaching

Reproof

Correction

Instruction in righteousness.

Homework: Find someone who does not have a Bible and provide them with one if you can or persuade them that this is the most important book to own and read.

The Two-edged Sword

For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. – Heb. 4:12

What if you had a flat and had to pull into the nearest parking lot. It is the middle of the night and you are in an unfamiliar part of town. Suddenly, some doors burst open and a dozen men spill into the same parking lot. They see your car and start heading toward you. They are all holding something in their hand. The object is dark and you cannot make it out until they are almost upon you. Suddenly, you recognize they are all holding Bibles. These men had just finished having a Bible Study. Even if you were an atheist, you would feel relief from the tense situation.

The Book of Hebrews was written to encourage Jewish Christians to remain faithful to God during difficult times and continued persecutions. Their Israelite history had been filled with instances of backsliding and rebellion against God. They are encouraged to remember God's powerful Word and His omniscience and omnipresence. *"Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall according to the same example of disobedience. For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account"* (Hebrews 4:11-13). As it was futile to resist the power of God's Word in the past, it remains hopeless to rebel against His Word now and in the future. This is due to the fact of the amazing nature of the Word of God, the Sword of the Spirit.

The Word of God is Alive

The Library of Congress lays claims to being the largest library in the world, with more than 130 million items on approximately 530 miles of bookshelves. Of all the books on all those shelves there is only one book which is alive. It is the most unique book in that it is living.

"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God" (2 Timothy 3:16). The term for "inspiration" literally means in the Greek, "God-breathed." It takes breath and air from the lungs to produce words from the mouth. If you have ever had the wind knock you out, it is very hard to form words. The Words of God come from the mouth of God. The Bible is speaking to us from a living God making it a living Word. When the Bible is open, God is speaking; when it is closed, He stops speaking.

The languages of Latin and Koine Greek are considered dead languages. Living beings do not speak these languages anymore as a means for everyday conversation. Dead languages do not adapt like living languages. This is why there are no words in Latin for modern things or ideas. The Bible speaks and is applicable to all people of all ages. It is always fresh and never fading in relevance. *"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness"* (2 Timothy 3:16). Jesus promised, *"My words will never pass away"* (Matthew 24:35).

The Word of God is Powerful

The term translated “powerful” in the King James Versions and in the New International is translated “active.” They come from the Greek word *energes*. From which we get “energy” and “energetic” and means “at work”. The Greeks would use this to denote potency or power of the venomous snakebite active in its victim. They would use the same term to refer to the power of medicine to actively counteract the venom.

◆ Power to Create

In the beginning the very universe was created by the power of God’s Word. *“He said, ‘Let there be light’ and that is what appeared (Gen. 1:2). ‘By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible’ (Heb. 11:3).* No other book or its author has this ability.

◆ Power to Sustain

This same universe which has been created by the Words of God are also sustained by them. By Jesus *“who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high” (Heb. 1:3).*

◆ Power to Prove

The Hebrew writer was warning the Jewish Christians of the dangers of turning away from following Christ and going back to Judaism. This epistle was written to give them evidence that in Christ, they had a better covenant, better sacrifice, better priesthood. better tabernacle, etc. Former agnostic C.S. Lewis, set out to disprove Christianity. He did so by going to the Bible and trying to prove it faulty. Instead of finding the errors that would discredit the Christian faith, he found the living God, and became an able defender of the faith. The historical and scientific accuracy of the Bible along with the predictive prophecies perfectly foretold and fulfilled provide such evidence. God said, *“so shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to Me void, But it shall accomplish what I please, And it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it” (Isa. 55:11).*

◆ Power to Save

The bookshelves of the world are filled with self-help books. But not one of these books can help one single reader to find a way to free himself from the guilt of sin, find salvation, and spiritual help to reconcile with God. Paul wrote, *“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” (Rom. 1:16).*

◆ Power to Effect Change or Transform

The Word of God is effective. When the Word of God acts, God acts. His Word is powerful enough to create the world from nothing, to raise the dead, to make the deaf to hear, the blind to see, the dumb to speak, and the lame to walk and to calm the sea storm by merely saying, “Peace be still”. Charles Swindoll, speaks to the transforming power of the Bible when he wrote, “News articles may inform us. Novels may inspire us. Poetry may enrapture us. But only the living, active Word of God can transform us.” The Bible was given by God for man’s transformation not just to give information.

In World War II a downed American pilot wrecked on an remote island. An islander found him and nursed him back to health. He was excited one day to show the American a Bible given to him by a missionary before the war. The service man tersely remarked, “O, I’ve outgrown that sort of thing.” This made the native laugh. He explained, “it is good that this (Bible) had transformed me from a cannibal or else instead of helping you I would have eaten you.”

◆ Power to Defeat God’s Enemies

After pointing out that our enemies are not made of flesh and blood but are spiritual, Paul commands us to *“take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand...and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God” (Eph. 6:13,17).* This is the only weapon powerful enough to defeat our enemies. The Christian

trains with the sword of the spirit by reading, studying, memorizing, meditating, and sharing the Word of God. The better you know the Word of God, the easier it will be for you to detect Satan's lies and reject his offers.

The Word of God is Penetrating

The Bible makes frequent comparisons between the Word of God and a sword (Eph. 6:17; Rev. 1:16; 2:12; 19:15; Is. 49:2). The Romans used two different swords. There was the long, powerful, heavy sword and the short, lightweight sword called *machaira* from which we get "machete." It was a double-edged sword that could cut both ways. It was kept very sharp. Peter used the same type of sword to cut off the ear of the servant of the High priest in the garden of Gethsemane on the night of Jesus' arrest.

The word "*piercing*" in Greek is *diikneomai*, which means "to go through." It is used in the Greek writings to refer to dissection in a surgery to remove a limb or lance a boil. Here the term describes the power of the Word to divide between things like as sword could divide the "*joints and marrow*." This is an expression used for the inner most part of a human body. The Word penetrates deep "*dividing soul and spirit*." It divides or discerns the very thoughts and attitudes of a man's heart.

Man has never and he could never make a sword so sharp and powerful it could cut down to the soul. It cuts right down through the bone into the soul and spirit. In the Encyclopedia of Religious Quotes, the following statement is attributed to Mark Twain: "Most people are bothered by those passages in Scripture which they cannot understand; but as for me, I always noticed that the passages in Scripture which trouble me most are those which I do understand" (34).

On the day of Pentecost Peter preached the first Gospel sermon and at one point accused his audience of killing the very Son of God. "*Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, 'Men and brethren, what shall we do?'*" (Ac. 2:37). This moved them to repent and be baptized. Later, when Stephen preached the Word of God to the Pharisees, he accused them of rebellion against God by killing the prophets and by being uncircumcised in heart and ears. "*When they heard these things they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed at him with their teeth*" (Ac. 7:54). The penetrating cut of the Bible has the power both to convict or to condemn.

When Alexander the Great came to the Gordian Knot, he was not confused or confounded by its solid, complexity. He simply took out his sharp sword and cut it in half. God's Word can cut through the most twist and hardened, soul so that He might help and heal. "*Now see that I, even I, am He, And there is no God besides Me; I kill and I make alive; I wound and I heal; Nor is there any who can deliver from My hand*" (Dt. 32:39).

The Word of God is Discerning

The Greek term *kritikos* is translated here as "*discerning*". From the Greek comes the English term "critic." God's word can critic and judge us like no other book. It can judge us by analyzing evidence of man's inner thought and motives. The Word of God "is a sifter and analyzer of the reflections and conceptions of the heart" (Wuest).

◆ God Sees Everything There is No Private Thought

The German poet, Johann Wolfgang Van Goethe, "I read all kinds of books, including sacred books, but the Bible stands alone because it reads me." As we read God's book, God's book reads us. It knows us. Why? The same Word which spoke the Words of the Bible spoke the universe into existence. This book alone is able to cut open and reveal our real motives. God knows what is in our thoughts as we drive down the highway and even the thoughts of our dreams. He has a Book which cuts through our cover ups and lays bare the hidden true self of a man.

◆ God Sees Everything There Is No Hiding

The writer makes a transition from God's word to God Himself in verse 13: "*And there is no*

creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account." The term "*naked*" means literally "laid bare." The word *tetrachelismena* literally refers to bending someone's neck backward so the face is looking upwards. John MacArthur in his commentary on Hebrews explains, "It was used of a wrestler taking his opponent by the throat. In this position the two men were unavoidably face to face. The other use was in regard to a criminal trial. A sharp dagger would be bound to the neck of the accused, with the point just below his chin, so that he could not bow his head, but had to face the court. Unavoidably face-to-face with the perfect truth about God and about himself" (105). The Bible is like God's X-ray machine. It is God's dissection scaple used as it performs a spiritual autopsy on the dead, soul. God knows everything there is to know about us, there is no place to hide.

◆ **God Sees Everything There Is No Escape**

Just as there is no escaping the eyes of God, there is not escaping the penetrating truth of the Bible. "*Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God*" (Rom 3:19). "*He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him—the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day*" (Jn. 12:48).

Dr. Emile Caillet, a professor at Princeton Seminary. Refused to have anything to do with the Bible until his wife brought one home. He read it. He said, "At last I have found the Book that understands me." And he became a believer in God and Christ.

The Bible is the only book that can accurately show us who we really are. And when it speaks, we begin to see ourselves as we really are. The Bible shows us we are all sinners. We are eternally lost. We need God to save us. We need God to show us the way to live and to get back to Him for eternity.

Many people read the Bible. Some have complained that they have gone through the Bible several times and it has not changed them. However, if they let the Bible penetrate and through them, they would have a different experience.

Questions:

1. Why was the Book of Hebrews written?
2. Explain how the Word of God is living or alive.
3. What does the fact that the Word of God is living indicate about his relevancy for modern man after thousands of years?
4. List passages showing God's Word has power to create out of nothing and to sustain that creation.
5. What evidence can be found in the Bible that provided prove that it came from God?

6. Give some examples in the Bible showing the Word of God transforming the lives of men and women.
7. Give examples of who the Word of God was used to defeat spiritual enemies of God and His people.
8. What does the Bible penetrate and give examples from the Bible of this?
9. Explain how the Bible reads us while we read it.
10. What does the all seeing eyes of God have to do with the Word of God?

Application & Discussion:

1. Study Jesus' temptations in Matthew 4:1-11 and explain how He used the Word of God to defeat the Devil.
2. List ways the Bible has cut or pricked your heart while you had read it.

Homework: Brush up on our swordmanship this week by studying God's Word.

Love Not the World

15 Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16 For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world. 17 And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.— 1 John 2:15-17

Warning: Do Not Love This World

Holding her favorite dolls in both arms a little girl complained about them to her mother. “Mamma, I love them and love them and love them, but they never love me back.”

This could be God’s complaint concerning the majority of mankind. He has loved us, loves us and continues to love us, but few love Him in return. Why? They are in love with this world.

Why are Christians forbidden here from loving the world? After all, God so love the world (John 3:16). The term “world” does not mean all of humanity which God loves and we should love. In the context of 1 John 2:15-17 “world” is used six times. In the text, “world” does not mean the physical planet, earth, created by God (Ps. 90:2). Instead, “world” refers to the evil world system which is under the control of Satan. *“The whole world lies in the power of the evil one”* (1 John 5:19). It is the worldly realm of darkness which excludes the God who is light. This definition alone should warrant not loving the world, however, John goes on to give the first century Christians five good reasons not to love the world.

x Loving the World and Loving God Are Mutually Exclusive

Demas, Paul lamented, deserted him *“having loved this present world”* (2 Timothy 4:10). Love for the world separated Demas from Paul. Love for the world also caused us to depart from God. It is not possible to love the world and God at the same time. God demands first place in our lives (Matt. 6:33). *“You cannot serve God and mammon”* and *“where you treasure is, there will your heart be also”* (Matt. 6:24,21). Christ said, *“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind”* (Matt. 22:37). If this command is implemented, there will be no room left in the heart, mind, and soul to love the wicked world. Furthermore, *“friendship with the world is hostility toward God”* (James 4:4).

x The World Did Not Originate With God

The reason love for the world excludes love for God is that all that is in the world is not of God. All that God has made is good, yes, very good (Gen. 1:31). This evil world originates not with God, but with Satan. This is a warning for all those who fall for its alluring attractions. Anything that is not of God is not going to last.

x Loving the World Involves...

Loving the world involves Satan’s strategy in tempting man to fall in love with the world. A paradigm for getting man to love this world has been created by the Devil. He uses his three pronged trident to move our love toward his world. The Devil’s Triangle *“in the world - the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life — is not of the father but is of the world”* (1 John 2:16). These include the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life.

First, Loving the world includes *"the lust of the flesh,"* that is, the carnal appetites of the flesh or the animal appetites. God gave us desires to be fulfilled in a lawful way. The world offers us alternative ways to satisfy our desires which appear to be more exciting and fulfilling. Satan used this appeal on Eve when she *"saw the tree was good for food"* (Gen. 3:6). David lusted after Bathsheba. Samson: "I saw a woman" and the rest of his life was from thence exemplified as a He-man with a She-weakness. Paul gives several lists of these sins (Gal. 5:19-21; 1 Cor. 6:9-10; Eph. 5:3-7; Col. 3:5).

Sexual sins are perhaps the best known forms of this lust. Women affect men by their looks and by how they dress and the way they look to men. Men affect women by what they say and by what and how they touch. So gentlemen, guard what you say and how you say it. Also, be careful how you touch a woman. You have a responsibility before God to assist in her purity. Hands off! "Pull down the window shades" when the women in the world, like Bathsheba, fail to use their shades.

Peter warns, *"Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul"* (1 Pet. 2:11).

Today, we are tempted by this through the philosophy of Hedonism. "1. the doctrine that pleasure is the only proper goal of moral endeavor. 2. The pursuit of pleasure." Call it what you may, the lust of the flesh demonstrates a great love for this world.

Loving the world involves *"the lust of the eyes."* Ever heard the expression "feast your eyes on this"? Well, the eyes have an appetite. The eye is the *"lamp of the body"* and *"if the eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness"* (Matt. 6:22-23). Many have been mesmerized by what they have seen in the world. Eve saw that the forbidden fruit *"was a delight to the eyes"* (Gen. 3:6). David lusted after a bathing beauty leading him to commit adultery and murder (2 Sam. 11:2). Achan coveted the forbidden treasures of Jericho (Josh 7:21). Lot lifted up his eyes toward the green pastures and pitch his tent toward Sodom (Gen. 13:10-11).

Keep in mind *"the lust of the eyes"* actually involves more than just what may be seen by the physical eye, but also what is encompassed and embraced by the mind and the imagination" (King 66).

The lust of the eyes is what we commonly refer to as "Materialism." A few years ago pop star Madonna sang about being a material girl. Today, most of those in the world can aptly be described as materialistic (2 Tim. 3:2). Yes, the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil (1 Tim. 6:9) and leads to departure from the faith (6:10). Having, needing or just wanting things is not wrong. The temptation is to covet, hoard, and be greedy. Such men are never satisfied (Pr. 27:20; Eccl. 5:20). Yet, in this land of opportunity and prosperity we rarely see covetousness and greed as a sin. One Catholic priest who had spent forty-two years listening to confessions said that covetousness was about the only sin he never heard anyone confess. The Rich Young Ruler would not obey Jesus because of his love for his worldly goods. Remember, life is more than possessions (Lk. 12:15).

Next, loving the world involves *"the pride of life."* This arrogant attitude is puffed up over the possessions and accomplishments of life. The ego cries out for honors, titles, pedigrees, offices, etc.. It clamors for "my rights, my life, my time, my body, my future..." Some of the Jews believed Jesus but would not confess Him because, *"they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God"* (John 12:42,43). Ananias and Sapphira lied to make themselves appear to be more than they were (Acts 5:1-11). Finally, many turn their affections to the love the world by The Pride of Life. Once more, Eve saw *"that the tree was desirable to make one wise,"* (Gen. 3:6). Satan so tempted Jesus by trying to get Him to cast Himself off the Temple wall (Mt. 4:5). Nebuchadnezzar's heart was lifted up with pride when he observed the greatness of his capital, Babylon (Dan. 4:30; 5:2). When King Uzziah's pride got the best of him God cursed him with leprosy (2 Chr. 26:16).

The Devil is proud so he wishes to make us like him (1 Tim. 3:6; Rom. 1:30). An oversized ego leads to contempt and rejection of God's Word and ministers (Jer. 13:2) and leads to self-deception (Jer. 49:16). It is a hindrance to seeking God (Hos. 7:10). "God is for weaklings" or "Religion is a crutch" they claim.

Today, Egotism abounds. Success and self-improvement seminars and programs focus on the power of self. Self-absorbed man cries out "My rights, my life, my body, my future..." God warns that

he resists the proud. *"But he gives more grace. Therefore, He says: 'God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.' Therefore submit to God. Resist he devil and he will flee from you."* (Js. 4:6,7).

x Love for the World Is Temporary

Man is deceived into believing that the joys of this sinful world are lasting; in reality, they are very temporary and perishable. Nobody in their right mind buys stock in a company that is sure to go bankrupt. Nobody books a cruise on a sinking ship. No reasonable person would love a world that is sure to be burned up and be destroyed forever. To love this transitory world is to share in its destruction. Loving the world is the ultimate fatal attraction.

x Loving Obedience to God Alone Leads to Life Everlasting

The opposite of loving the world is not only loving the Father (verse 15), but also doing the Will of the Father (verse 17). True love for God involves obeying God's Will (John 14:15,21;15:10; 1 John 2:5; 5:3). Loving the world obstructs obedience to God's Word. The Will of God is the precise antithesis of *"all that is in the world."* One letter makes a difference: some love the world and some love the Word.

The reward of not loving this world is to inherit the next. Loving this world will result in losing everything. Loving God will succeed in gaining everything.

Paul warned, *"If any one has no love for the Lord, let him be accursed!"* (1 Cor. 16:22). And Jesus said, *"be of good cheer; I have overcome the world"* (Jn. 16:33).

Jesus Teaches Us How to Overcome the World

Why does the Tempter tempt? He wants to get man to fall in love with this world, we will not be able to love God. The Devil does not want man to love God their Father and Creator, but to fall in love with the sinful world he has created. John warns, *"Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love the father is not in him"* (1 Jn. 2:15). Love of the world is proof of not loving God.

Jesus was tempted just like us but with different result. *"For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin"* (Heb. 4:15). How was Jesus able to accomplish this great feat of defeat?

Christ had been fasting for forty days. This fast was total abstinence from food for Luke says explicitly, *"he did eat nothing."* Next, is found one of the greatest understatement of all time: *"He then became hungry."* There was no sin in being hungry. Yet Satan suggested that, if Christ were God's Son, God should not let Him hunger. Basically, Satan is saying: *"If You are the Son of God"*, he was trying to cast despairing doubt in the mind of Christ. Evidently, Christ's belief in His Deity was a point of attack by Satan.

How did Christ deal with this? Did He perform a miracle to fill His stomach and prove Satan wrong? No. He used the written Word as the lamp for His feet (Ps. 119:105). He said, *"It is written"*. He appealed to the authority of the scriptures to answer.

Jesus was confident God would provide for Him, too. Satan was tempting Jesus to take things into His own hands. Jesus' response brought to light the motive behind Satan's request. In essence He said, *"My ultimate responsibility is not simply to satisfy My physical needs, but to obey My Father in heaven."* Jesus established His Sonship, not on Satan's terms, but on the Father's.

Next, Satan took Christ to the pinnacle of the Temple and told that if He was the Christ and cast himself off. Christ was to prove His deity to Satan by testing the love of God and making an unnecessary show of God's power. *"If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down. For it is written: 'He shall give His angels charge over you,' and, 'In their hands they shall bear you up, Lest you dash your foot against a stone.'"* (Matt. 4:6). Christ would not put the love of God to the test by a needless miracle. Miracles were preformed by the Lord to produce belief (Jn. 20: 30,31). Jesus was constantly urged to do miracles to satisfy curiosity.

Christ replies, *"it is written, again"*, thus showing the harmony of the scriptures. To get a right understanding of God's Will we must compare Scripture with Scripture. The Bible is not made up of

isolated texts. By the use of the word *"again"* Jesus is show that God does not contradict His Word. Scripture is harmonious. One verse is not to be used to nullify another or to counteract the whole tenor of Divine truth. God does not give us conflicting duties.

Now Satan has resorted to a blatant temptation. There was no deceit and no mention of Jesus' Sonship. This temptation offered an easy path. The devil is offering Jesus a short cut to the achieving of His objective. God's way led to the cross (Mt. 26:39). The Son of man would not take the easy way out. Satan's sweetest temptation was the most repulsive to Christ. *"Again, the devil took Him up on an exceedingly high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. And he said to Him, 'All these things I will give You if You will fall down and worship me'"* (Matt. 4:8-9).

Then Jesus said to him, *"Away with you, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only you shall serve'"* (Mt. 4:10). For the third time Jesus quoted from Deuteronomy (6:13). The scripture was written to the end that all might only worship God and serve Him. This text refers back to the incident of the golden calf (Ex. 32:1-6). Christ would worship and serve only the Lord.

To sum it up, Jesus was victorious over temptation. By remembering He was the Son of God and not of the god of this world. He also knew and could correctly use the Word of God. Jesus replied, *"away with you Satan."* Temptation must be promptly rejected. Notice, Jesus didn't stop to weigh the matter.

We have this choice. We can tell him to "get" or we can invite him into our heart and give him a comfortable seat. *"Resist the Devil and he will flee from you"* (Js. 4:7). Victory is only temporary. Satan only left *"for a season"* (Lk. 4:12). Certainly Jesus faced many other occasions of temptation (See, Jn. 6:15; Lk. 22:28; Mt. 27:39-44). Forty days of victory did not preclude future temptations. We must always be alert for the Devil's return, no matter how victorious we've been. Finally, angels came to Jesus to serve Him, possibly to provide Him the sustenance as one did for Elijah (1 Kings 19:5-8) and the support that He had denied Himself during the forty days of His fast. Remember there is joy in heaven over one sinner who repents. God is there through it all. He is faithful. We may feel alone, but we are not alone.

Questions:

1. What the meaning the word "world" in verses fifteen through seventeen?
2. Why is it that loving the world and loving God are mutually exclusive?
3. What is the origin of this "world"?
4. List those sins which would be examples of *"lusts of the flesh"*?
5. Give Bible examples of those who succumbed to the *"lusts of the eyes"*?

6. How did Satan use the *"pride of life"* to tempt Eve into sin?
7. What is it vain or foolish to love this world and the things in it?
8. What is the blessing in store for those who obey God and do not love this world?
9. True False Jesus was only tempted three times in the wilderness.
10. What was Satan's objective in the first temptation to get Jesus to sin?
11. How did Jesus respond to this first temptation?
12. What was the second temptation of Jesus in Matthew's gospel?
13. How did Jesus respond to this second temptation?
14. What did Satan offer to do for Jesus in the third temptation? What was the price tag?
15. Why would Satan's plan not work for Jesus?
16. How did Jesus respond to this temptation?
17. " _____ the Devil and he will _____ from you" (James 4:7).
18. True False Satan left Jesus never to return and tempt Him.

Application and Discussion:

1. List several passages of scripture you should memorize to help you battle temptation.

2. List the various ways and means Christians can overcome the evil one (Eph. 6:10-17; 18; James 1:5; 1 Cor. 10:13; Luke 4:8; James 1:2,3; Eph. 4:26,27; 1 Pet. 5:8; James 4:7; 2 Cor. 13:5; Ps. 119:9).

Homework: Over the next several days take time out to assess your spiritual growth and how much you love this world. List some things you can to do improve in these areas.

Adding and Subtracting

For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book. – Revelation 22:18-19

Just think about the danger of adding to and subtracting from the blueprints for a building or a ship or even a physician's prescription, Serious destruction, injury or even death could result. This tampering could be criminal. Any country who would send an ambassador to seek terms of peace with another country would expect their representative not to go against their decisions and add to or take away from their set terms. This too could result in war and the cost of many lives.

In Revelation 22:18-19 a stern warning is given with sever consequences to anyone who adds to or takes away from Christ's Revelation to John. This passage serves as a very demanding challenge to all those who would preach and teach or write about the Word. Not just to them but to all who would hear and read God's Word.

The Warner

The warning not to add or take away is given not by John but through him as Jesus' penman. "Jesus most likely is the speaker because the personal pronoun I harmonizes with verse 16, and the verb 'to testify' appears in verse 20 where Jesus is the speaker" (Kistemaker 593).

The Warned

The warning is to "everyone." Whether they be an apostle of Christ or the Pope of the Roman Catholic Church or the denominational delegates who meet to vote on articles of "faith." It is everyone who "hears." Revelation 1:3 is the first of seven beatitudes in this prophecy. It is given not only to the readers and listeners but to the keepers of the things written in this book. "Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it; for the time is near" (Rev. 1:3). The first beatitude forms and inclusio with the last and seventh beatitude. "Behold, I am coming quickly! Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book." (Rev. 22:7). Throughout John's Revelation those who are hearers and listeners must be doers or those who keep the commandments of Christ. "I know your works. See, I have set before you an open door, and no one can shut it; for you have a little strength, have kept My word, and have not denied My name...Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth" (3:8,10).

This warning does not have the honest scribe in mind who may accidentally add or delete words. It would admonish any scribes copying this book and being tempted to make additions and leave out part of the message given to John. Bruce Metzger observes, "When books were copied by hand, scribes would occasionally add comments of their own or leave out words they thought were unsuitable. John therefore includes at the end of his book a solemn warning declaring that nothing should be added or

deleted, for the very good reason that it is a revelation from God (22:18-19)."

The Words Written

Does this warning apply to the whole Bible or just this book? No other New Testament book has this type of warning attached to the end of it. However, these verses apply only to Revelation. Perhaps God was anticipating the temptation of man who would add a fantastical theory or delete the book as insignificant for God's people of today. "It has always been a temptation for every generation to read its own current events ('newspaper exegesis') into the text of the Revelation" (Hindson 227). Often congregations will not study the book of Revelation. Thus it has been referred to as the great turn back book. Churches will study the Bible from Genesis to Jude and when they get to Revelation, they simply turn back to Genesis.

There are parallel warnings found in the Law of Moses. *"Now, O Israel, listen to the statutes and the judgments which I teach you to observe, that you may live, and go in and possess the land which the Lord God of your fathers is giving you. You shall not add to the word which I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you"* (Deut. 4:1-2). *"Whatever I command you, be careful to observe it; you shall not add to it nor take away from it"* (Deut. 12:32). Another similar warning is found in the middle of the Bible. *"Do not add to His words, lest He rebuke you, and you be found a liar"* (Prov. 30:6). Thus this warning is found at the beginning, middle and end of the Bible.

These types of warnings appear frequently in the throughout the Old Testament. *"These words the LORD spoke to all your assembly, in the mountain from the midst of the fire, the cloud, and the thick darkness, with a loud voice; and He added no more. And He wrote them on two tablets of stone and gave them to me"* (Deuteronomy 5:22). *"Only be strong and very courageous, that you may observe to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may prosper wherever you go"* (Joshua 1:7). *"Thus says the Lord: 'Stand in the court of the Lord's house, and speak to all the cities of Judah, which come to worship in the Lord's house, all the words that I command you to speak to them. Do not diminish a word'"* (Jer. 26:2).

Additional warnings against tampering with the Word of God is found throughout the New Testament. *"I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed"* (Gal. 1:6-9). *"For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables"* (2 Tim. 4:3-4). *"If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God..."* (1 Peter 4:11a). Or as Thomas Campbell put it, "We will speak where the Bible speaks and be silent where the Bible is silent." *"And consider that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation—as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you, as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures"* (2 Peter 3:15-16). *"Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son"* (2 John 9).

This warning is a common literary convention found throughout the ancient writings. The letter of Ariseas, with reference to the translation of the Septuagint, says, "And when the whole company expressed their approval, they bade them pronounce a curse in accordance with their custom upon any one who should make any alteration either by adding anything or changing in any way whatever any of the words which had been written or making any omission. This was a very wise precaution to ensure that the book might be preserved for all the future time unchanged (311)" (Morris 255). Warnings like this one

are also found in the Jewish apocrypha and the Pseudepigrapha, as well as the writings of the early Christians such as, Barnabas. Barnabas warned his readers; “you shall guard what you have received neither adding nor subtracting anything” (Barn 19:11).

This warning may be specifying the writings of John’s Revelation but by extension anyone who reads any part of God’s inspired word are included in all the warnings against tampering with the Bible.

While Deuteronomy may be Law and Proverbs is part of the wisdom literature of the Old Testament, Revelation is time again called “prophecy”. The term “prophecy” appears seven times in the book of Revelation and twice in our text. (1:3 11:6; 19:10, 22:7,10,18,20). True prophecy only comes from God who alone can predict the future and share His Will. Five times we find the phrase “*the words of the book of this prophecy*” (1:3; 22:7,10,18,19).

The Warning Not to Add

The first warning is not to add anything to Christ’s revelation to John. And due to the many passages giving similar warnings as listed above, no one should add anything to the Bible. This does not mean that giving a clear explanation of a term or cultural or historical event in a sermon or Bible study is forbidden. In fact, this is essential to teaching as shown in Nehemiah 8:8: “*So they read distinctly from the book, in the Law of God; and they gave the sense, and helped them to understand the reading.*” Jesus explained the meaning of Old Testament passages throughout His ministry.

The warning is for anyone who would be adding to the teachings of the inspired Word of God. “*You also have those who hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate*” (Rev. 2:16). In fact, the Bible is filled with examples of those who added to God’s Word. The Pharisees adding their traditions to the Law of Moses became a major source of contention between Jesus and the Pharisees. When they point out the sinfulness of His disciples who were eating with unwashed hands (Matthew 15:2). Jesus asked them, “*Why do you also transgress the commandment of God because of your tradition? For God commanded, saying, ‘Honor your father and your mother’; and, ‘He who curses father or mother, let him be put to death.’ But you say, ‘Whoever says to his father or mother, “Whatever profit you might have received from me is a gift to God”— then he need not honor his father or mother.’ Thus you have made the commandment of God of no effect by your tradition*” (Matthew 15:3-6). He condemned their additions to the Law of Moses, saying, “*Hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy about you, saying: ...in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.*” (Matthew 15:7,9). Satan is the one who started these additions when he told Eve “*You will not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil*” (Gen. 3:4,5).

Throughout the centuries mankind has been busy adding to and embellishing God’s Word. They had added Holy Days such as Easter and Christmas. They have taken the name “Christians” (Acts 11:26) and made hyphenated Christians, such as, Methodist-Christians or Lutheran Christians. They have made common meals (often called “fellowship meals”) and entertainment to the work of the church. They have added instrumental music and tithing to the worship of God. Some had added Holy Spirit Baptism to the baptism of the Great Commission in the Plan of Salvation. Even though Paul clearly said there is only one baptism (Eph. 4:4-6). How else does one add to the Word? Some add by claiming new revelation. Mormons have added the Book of Mormon and the Doctrines and Covenants. Science and Health and Key to the Scriptures have been put on an equal standing with the Holy Scriptures by the Church of Christ Scientists. Most denominations add to the word of God by their creeds and church manuals.

The consequences are very severe for those adding to God’s Word: “*God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book*” (Rev. 22:18b). The punishment fits the crime: you add to God and God will add to you. The seven plagues are mentioned in chapter fifteen and sixteen. These are given to those who worship and follow the Beast. However, more immediate to our text is: “*And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire*” (Rev. 20:15). “*But the cowardly, 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" (21:8). In the Bible, God had punished those who ignored His commandments by adding to them a punishment to correspond with their sin. Gehazi's greed resulted in him being given the leprosy of Naaman (2 Kings 5). The priests Nadab and Abihu offered strange fire to the Lord and He sent fire from heaven to devour them (Lev. 10:1-3).

The Warning Not to Subtract

The second warning is: *"if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book"* (Rev. 22:19). When Adam and Eve ignored God's command not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, God made the punishment fit the sin. They were banished from the tree of life and Paradise. Some foot notes have "tree of life" instead of "book of life" but the results are the same either way. The holy city is Heaven. Those who do not take away but obey God's commandments *"have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city"* (22:15). The church at Ephesus was encouraged to remain faithful to Christ: *"To him who overcomes I will give to eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God."* (Rev. 2:7). Those who worship the Beast will not have their names written in the Book of Life (Rev. 13:8). *"And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire"* (Rev. 20:15). In reference to those who are permitted in the Holy City (Heaven) Jesus said, *"But there shall by no means enter it anything that defiles, or causes an abomination or a lie, but only those who are written in the Lamb's Book of Life"* (Rev. 21:27). Those who subtract will be subtracting themselves from the pages of the Book of Life, access to the Tree of Life and from Heaven.

Today, some are literally striving to remove or take away the words of Jesus from the Gospels. The Jesus Seminar in short attempts to find the words that Jesus actually said as recorded in the Gospels. Thus eliminating what they perceive as additions by others throughout the centuries. The Jehovah's Witnesses claim Jesus was really Michael the Archangel thus taking away His deity. This denomination also removes eternal punishment in Hell but claiming that hell only means the grave. Perhaps the most common problem with taking away from God's Word is found with the rejection of the purpose of baptism. Many denominations claim that Baptism does not save anyone. Peter said it does save (1 Peter 3:21). Jesus promised, *"he that believes and is baptized will be saved"* (Mark 16:16). It is said by several denominations that baptism does not wash away sins. God sent the preacher Ananias to Paul to tell Paul what he must do. *"And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord"* (Acts 22:16). Countless other examples can be given of those who taken away the inspired words of God.

It is a very serious matter indeed to tamper with the Word of God. Those who add to or take away are adding to themselves the plagues of God and subtracting their right to the tree of life, their names from the Book of Life and their citizenship in Heaven. The revealed Words of God in the Bible are the only means by which man really knows God's will for them. To change it in anyway destroys man's eternal relationship with God.

Questions:

1. Who is giving the warning in the text?
2. Who is being warned?

3. Compare Revelation 1:3 with Revelation 22:7. What do you see?
4. True False This warning is solely focusing on the honest scribe who may accidentally add or delete words.
5. Does this warning apply to the whole Bible or just this book? Explain.
6. How do some misuse the book of Revelation?
7. List the parallel warnings found in the Old Testament.
8. List similar warnings found in the New Testament.
9. Where else outside the Bible are similar warns found?
10. Give examples of those who added to the God's Word in the Old and New Testament.
11. What punishments or "plagues" are added to those who add to God's Word?
12. What are the consequences of taking away from God's Word?

Application & Discussion:

1. If other examples not listed in this lesson where people or denominations are adding to God's Word.
2. If other examples not listed in this lesson where people or denominations are subtracting from God's Word.

Homework: Make a list of some other great verses in both the Old and New Testament.

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