

Volume 5

# A Word in Season:

Daily Messages on the Faith for All of Life

R. J. Rushdoony

Chalcedon/Ross House Books

Vallecito, California

Copyright 2014

Mark R. Rushdoony

Most of the articles in this compilation were originally published in the *California Farmer*. Chapters 16, 43, 54, 57, 58, 61, 65, 80, and 81 appear here in print for the first time.

Ross House Books

PO Box 158

Vallecito, CA 95251

[www.ChalcedonStore.com](http://www.ChalcedonStore.com)

All rights reserved.

No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means — electronic, mechanical, photocopy, recording, or otherwise — except for brief quotations for the purpose of review or comment, without the prior written permission of the publisher.

Library of Congress: 2014941204

10 digit: 9781879998698

*Printed in the United States of America*

*Other titles by Rousas John Rushdoony*

*The Institutes of Biblical Law, Vol. I*

*The Institutes of Biblical Law, Vol. II, Law & Society*

*The Institutes of Biblical Law, Vol. III, The Intent of the Law*

*Systematic Theology (2 volumes)*

*Commentaries on the Pentateuch:*

*Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy*

*Chariots of Prophetic Fire*

*The Gospel of John*

*Romans & Galatians*

*Hebrews, James, & Jude*

*The Cure of Souls*

*Sovereignty*

*The Death of Meaning*

*Noble Savages*

*Larceny in the Heart*

*To Be As God*

*The Biblical Philosophy of History*

*The Mythology of Science*

*Thy Kingdom Come*

*Foundations of Social Order*

*This Independent Republic*

*The Nature of the American System*

*The "Atheism" of the Early Church*

*The Messianic Character of American Education*

*The Philosophy of the Christian Curriculum*

*Christianity and the State*

*Salvation and Godly Rule*

*God's Plan for Victory*

*Politics of Guilt and Pity*

*Roots of Reconstruction*

*The One and the Many*

*Revolt Against Maturity*

*By What Standard?*

*Law & Liberty*

A Word in Season, Vol. I, Vol. II, Vol. III, Vol. IV

Chalcedon

PO Box 158 • Vallecito, CA 95251

[www.chalcedon.edu](http://www.chalcedon.edu)

## Contents

1. [By Him All Things Consist](#)
2. [The Call to Victory](#)
3. [Let the Dead Bury the Dead](#)
4. [The Great Retreat](#)
5. [Choices](#)
6. [Oppression as Law](#)
7. [Property and the Family](#)
8. [Am I My Brother's Keeper?](#)
9. [See Life](#)
10. [The Straightness of God's Rule](#)
11. [Peace Among Ourselves](#)
12. [Remembering God](#)
13. [A Story Without an Ending](#)
14. [Which Savior?](#)
15. [National Defense](#)
16. ["That Thy Days May Be Long"](#)
17. [Honor Thy Father and Mother](#)
18. [The Fright Peddlers](#)
19. [The Christ Child](#)
20. [Trees and Babies](#)
21. [Power Poles](#)
22. [Profane Living](#)
23. [The Needed Change](#)
24. [Wisdom](#)
25. [Trashiness](#)
26. [Is the Underdog Always Innocent?](#)
27. [Chaos vs. Order](#)
28. [Is the Family Finished?](#)
29. [Discipline](#)
30. [The Trouble with Statistics](#)
31. [Opinions](#)
32. [Idolatry](#)
33. [A Good Conscience](#)

34. [The Spiritual Man](#)
35. [Rejoice](#)
36. [Dangerous People](#)
37. [The Judgment of Hypocrites](#)
38. [Can We Sanctify Folly?](#)
39. [Giving to God](#)
40. [Mother Murder](#)
41. [How to Be a Blessing](#)
42. [How to Be a Curse](#)
43. [Basic Education](#)
44. [Horror Stories](#)
45. [A Bad Teacher](#)
46. [The Almighty](#)
47. [The Family of Christ](#)
48. [The Death of a Lady](#)
49. [The Gospel](#)
50. [The Failure of Peashooter Religion](#)
51. [The Inheritance of Patience](#)
52. [Love Is of God](#)
53. [The Everlasting Arms](#)
54. [“Pray Without Ceasing”](#)
55. [The Lamp](#)
56. [The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob](#)
57. [The Law of Kindness](#)
58. [Ingratitude](#)
59. [Thanksgiving](#)
60. [The Church](#)
61. [The Vindication of Joseph](#)
62. [Our Father](#)
63. [The Sons of God](#)
64. [In Due Season](#)
65. [Thanksgiving](#)
66. [Faith](#)
67. [Black Power](#)
68. [Accept No Substitutes](#)

69. [The Old Country Church](#)
70. [The Good Neighbor](#)
71. [Is Equality Possible?](#)
72. [Prejudice](#)
73. [Foolishness in the Heart](#)
74. [Weathermen](#)
75. [The Trouble with Thieves](#)
76. [Immoral Indignation](#)
77. [On Racism](#)
78. [Snobs](#)
79. [Foundations](#)
80. [Hearing and Speaking](#)
81. [Troubles and God](#)

[The Author](#)

[The Ministry of Chalcedon](#)

# By Him All Things Consist

Paul, in Colossians 1:13–17, says that we are redeemed and made members of the Kingdom of Christ through His atonement. All things were not only created by Him and for Him, but even more, “by him all things consist.”

The word “consist” is in the Greek *sunistemi*, a combination of two words: *sun*, or “with,” and *histemi*, “to stand.” Nothing in heaven or in earth can stand apart from Jesus Christ.

This means that whether it be politics, education, economics, the family, the church, or anything else, including all persons, they cannot stand long without Christ. To have a Christless education, politics, or economics is to invite disaster, which we are seeing. He is the foundation, and without Him the storms of life in time bring about the collapse of every structure built upon sand, upon man (Matt. 7:26–27).

“By him all things consist”—beginning with ourselves. We are sure to make a shambles of our lives on any other foundation. We then presuppose some other source of truth in the universe, that is, some other way of life, than Jesus Christ. If we build on such a lie, we turn our lives into a lie, and we make trouble and disaster inevitable. We have then no man to blame but ourselves.

Since “by him all things consist,” we had better make Him the foundation of all in our lives.

## The Call to Victory

During the Middle Ages, much of Spain was under Moslem rule. The Christian Spaniards under Arabic government sometimes had serious difficulties but their faith was governed by the knowledge of their calling to dominion. Their order of service in church was known as the Mozarabic Rite, a service which a few years back was used only in one chapel in the Cathedral at Toledo. A remarkable aspect of that service was the use in every service of the proclamation by the pastor of two verses, Psalm 2:7,8:

The Lord hath said unto me: Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee. Desire of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance: and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.

Our Lord has these words in mind in the Great Commission (Matt. 28:18-20), when He sends forth His disciples into all the world, to bring all men and nations under the dominion of and in a saving relationship to Himself.

We have been called in Christ to victory (1 John 5:4), and we dare not shirk that calling. The whole world must know Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. His dominion must begin with us. We must be fully commanded by Him, in total obedience to Him, and in all things faithful to Him.

The world must be conquered for Christ. There is no power too great for Him, no evil He cannot conquer, nor any barrier too high for Him to scale.

We have not been called to enjoy ourselves but to serve Him. We live in a world moving from disaster to disaster, and we must not be indifferent to the pressing nature of our crisis. Our world has no hope apart from Christ. If we fail to fulfill Christ's dominion mandate to us, He will judge us also.

## Let the Dead Bury the Dead

A man who wanted to follow our Lord said, “Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father.” But Jesus said, “Follow me; and let the dead bury their dead” (Matt. 8:21–22). If death had priority for this man, Jesus wanted no part of him. This was in terms of God’s law. For example, a priest could not join in mourning, nor in grief for the dead, like other men (Lev. 21:1–4, 10–11), because he represented Him who is Life. We are God’s royal priesthood.

As a result, in Bible times, a wedding always took priority over a funeral. Weddings were not postponed because of deaths in the family, because life has priority. If a wedding procession and a funeral cortege met in the streets, or at the crossroads, the wedding had the right of way, and the funeral party was expected to go a short distance with the wedding party to express the priority of life in God’s sight.

Today of course, the reverse is true. Death takes priority everywhere, not life. In a sinful world, death rules. In Christ’s realm, life rules, and the bride, bridegroom, and wedding are symbols and types of the joy of the Lord.

In the world of sin and death, problems and troubles concern men most. In the world of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, it is opportunities, duties, service, faith, and obedience which concern Christ’s people above all else, not death and troubles.

Which world do you belong to, to the realm of sin and death, or to Christ and His righteousness? Is it the joy of the Lord, or the sorrows of this world which govern and possess you? A sour Christian is a contradiction in terms. Paul, who suffered more troubles than any of us, commands us, saying, “Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice” (Phil. 4:4). Christians are not in a funeral procession but members of a wedding party. Rejoice!

## The Great Retreat

Times have changed. I was just reading about the San Francisco earthquake and fire of 1906. The Wells Fargo-Nevada Bank at Pine and Montgomery was destroyed by the fire, except for the fireproof vault. As a result, they had no books or records, and this was true of other banks as well. The records of depositors were also lost. On the strength of the depositors' statements alone, with silver money from the U.S. Mint, the banks paid out large sums to depositors, who were naturally in need of funds. The depositors proved trustworthy. Later, as data was reconstructed, the total loss of the Wells Fargo-Nevada Bank (its name then) was less than \$200, and this was due to vague recollections, probably, of their exact deposit by depositors.

This is not all. Wells Fargo, to help people escape from the fire to Golden Gate Park, turned over its horses, wagons, and trucks to volunteer drivers to carry people and their possessions. All their equipment was later returned.

Now remember, this was the San Francisco of the Barbary Coast. It had all the evils of today and far more. But it also had a strong and effective element of godly men. The difference between then and now is at this point. Evil has always been a problem. How much of a problem it becomes depends on the godly element and their stand.

Not even in its godly element was San Francisco anything remarkable then. In fact, much could be said in criticism of it. Still, the righteous men were sufficiently in strength, and the background of Christian training such, that, in a crisis so remarkable a sense of responsibility was manifested.

Solomon writes, "Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people" (Prov. 14:34). The word translated as "reproach" appears also in Leviticus 20:17 and is translated as "a wicked thing." It can also be rendered as "disgrace," something which drags down and destroys. Righteousness thus develops and prospers a people morally and in every way, whereas sin disgraces and destroys it.

Today, in many areas of our nation, we are lacking in any strong men of faith and character. A crisis today is not likely to have the results which Wells Fargo and other banks reported after 1906.

Then and now, we have always had the poor with us. We have also had the evil. The difference is that we do not now have the godly men to cope with problems in terms of the faith, nor to confront evil in terms of God's power. Thus, the situation today is what it is not because we have social problems, nor because we have evil in our midst. The problem is that the godly are in retreat, retreat from action and therefore from godliness. The problem is us.

## Choices

There is an old proverb which says, “We would all be rich, if we didn’t have to eat.” This is simply another way of saying that we all have priorities, and we make our choices in terms of them.

Some men choose to be miserly on food, clothing, and shelter, because they value money so highly. They may like their family, but they love money more, and so they sacrifice everything to accumulate money. Others sacrifice for their children, and everything else takes second place in their lives.

Many other examples could be cited, but we can summarize it thus: we are always making choices, consciously or unconsciously, in terms of what we prize or love the most. Our choices reveal our faith.

Joshua summoned Israel and us to decision, declaring, “[C]hoose you this day whom ye will serve,” the Lord or false gods (Josh. 24:15). Later, Elijah summoned the people to decide between God and Baal (1 Kings 18:21). Over and over again, the Bible demands that we choose, and warns us that all our actions represent a choice.

Everything you and I did last year and yesterday, and are doing today, represents a choice, and a decision about priorities. Our lives continually witness for us or against us as to what we believe in, what we sacrifice for, and what we have chosen.

But here a strange and remarkable fact enters in. The godly man recognizes that he has been called and chosen by God. He is therefore under authority. His choices have been made by God and set forth in Scripture. The Ten Commandments spell out God’s choice and law. Man has no free option. One way is sin, and the other faith, obedience, and blessing. The godly man rejoices in God’s Word and choice, and it is his joy that God “shall choose our inheritance for us” (Ps. 47:4).

Our choices thus reveal whether or not we are chosen by God or self-chosen. The self-chosen say, “My will be done,” whereas the chosen of God, as C. S. Lewis saw, will say to God, “Thy will be done.”

Your life reveals your choices. What are they?

## Oppression as Law

The news about the public schools gets worse daily. We read now that in San Francisco lesbians and male homosexuals are allowed to visit that city's high schools to explain and defend homosexuality to the students. No such right is given to Christians. Indeed, we read frequently of a teacher fired somewhere for doing no more than giving favorable treatment to the Bible.

What can we expect of a country that does this? What kind of future do we have? Psalm 94:20 declares, "Shall the throne of iniquity have fellowship with thee, which frameth mischief by a law?" The Berkeley Version renders this verse thus: "Can a corrupt government be allied with Thee, one that organizes oppression under the pretense of law?"

This, of course, we have been doing for some time now, organizing oppression under the pretense of law. In one area after another, law has ceased to be a protection to the righteous and has become an oppression. Our laws and our taxes now discriminate against the hardworking and the godly citizens. It has become dangerous to have a new law: it winds up penalizing us rather than the criminals.

In the face of all this, students are taught, "there's nothing perverted about being a gay," and they are taught to "act out gay roles." At the same time, last November the U.S. Supreme Court struck down a Kentucky law requiring the Ten Commandments to be posted in all schools! Perhaps the judges felt it would be traumatic or upsetting for children (those who have learned to read) to see such statements as "Thou shalt not steal."

Under the circumstances, what can we expect from God except judgment? Should we be surprised or upset if the years ahead become grimmer and grayer?

Remember, there may not be justice in our schools and courts, but there is in God's universe.

## Property and the Family

Property is protected by two of the Ten Commandments: “Thou shalt not steal” and “Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour’s house . . . nor any thing that is thy neighbour’s.” Three commandments directly protect the family: “Honor thy father and thy mother,” “Thou shalt not commit adultery,” and “[T]hou shalt not covet thy neighbour’s wife.” The family and property are thus clearly very important in God’s law. Frederick Engels, Karl Marx’s associate, in *The Origin of the Family: Private Property and the State*, declared that private ownership of property was the economic foundation of monogamy and the family. For Engels, both had to go.

Why did Engels see a necessary connection between the family and property? The answer is very simple. For any institution to exist, it must have independence; it must be free. How long would a club last if every step and act were controlled and dictated by some tyrant? It would then cease to have any meaning or life for its members; it would only be a puppet manipulated by the tyrant. Similarly, the family can only truly exist if it be free, and the economic foundation of the family’s freedom is private property. This is why communism, in its war against the family, has steadily limited and destroyed the rights of private ownership. Property then is necessary for the survival of the family.

Property is necessary, not only for the survival and freedom of the family, but it is also necessary for the authority of the family. Under communism, the children’s future depends on loyalty to the state. The children are therefore loyal to the state and disloyal to their parents. Communistic children readily spy on their parents for the state and often denounce their parents. The real authority in their lives is the state, because it provides for their future, and the state also has the power to destroy their chances of success or survival. But, where the father possesses private property and provides for his children’s care and future, it is the authority of the father which governs the family.

Engels also saw the right of inheritance of property as an economic foundation of the family, and rightly so. Where property belongs to the family, and the father can will it to a godly son, or disinherit him for waywardness, the authority of the family is strengthened and the discipline of the family is undergirded. Honor and authority go hand in hand, and where parents have authority, they are more readily honored.

Property gives power to man and the family. It is God’s will, clearly declared in Scripture, that man possess, develop, and use land and personal property under God. The transfer of property to the state means that man’s God-given powers are transferred to the state and man is

reduced progressively to slavery. More is at stake in private ownership than property: man's freedom under God is the issue.

## Am I My Brother's Keeper?

Quite regularly, thousands of preachers take Genesis 4:9 as their text and preach a revolting sermon on "Am I My Brother's Keeper?" Their answer is, yes, we are our brother's keeper, and we are sinning if we are not keeping him, providing for his welfare and looking after his needs. If we do not, then we become guilty men like Cain, the first murderer.

This is all hogwash; there is nothing Biblical about it. *First* of all, the whole question, "Am I my brother's keeper?" comes from Cain, the murderer. The statement itself is as rotten as the man. God did not answer Cain because he did not deserve an answer for so contemptible a statement. *Second*, the proper answer would be, no, Cain, you are not your brother's keeper, and no man is his brother's keeper; but you are your brother's brother. You have a responsibility, not to keep him, but to live in honesty, faith, and law-abiding relationship with him under God.

God makes no man his brother's keeper. Certainly, my brother would not take kindly to being kept by me, nor would I take kindly to being kept by him. We are both free men under God. Any man who wants to be kept by me is a parasite, and any man who wants to keep me is a dictator and tyrant.

Communism declares that it is man's keeper and that it will lead men into paradise on earth, but the Communists, like all who try to apply Cain's principle, end up as their brother's murderer. Their principle is, "Let us keep you, or we will kill you."

Our own politicians are also like Cain in their thinking. They insist that they are the keeper for all who need keeping, but they insist on doing this keeping with our money. This is the mentality of the murderer Cain, who felt that the right to take life or to leave it was his, or to keep or not to keep his brother was his right. In other words, Cain made his own law as he went along; he was a law unto himself.

My brother and I, and all men, are alike under God. I have a responsibility to provide for my family, but even here my keeping is strictly under God's law. I cannot be my own law. Moreover, my family's basic keeper and mine is the Lord. And David said, "The LORD is thy keeper" (Ps. 121:5). As Abel's keeper, the Lord passed judgment on Cain. As David's keeper, the Lord preserved him from the enmity of Saul and made him king in Saul's stead. He has been my keeper also.

The Lord never made me my brother's keeper, simply my brother's brother, a better relationship. And we both prefer the Lord as our keeper, not Cain nor his preachers.

## See Life

In Ecclesiastes 9:9, we have a sentence which begins, “Live joyfully with the wife whom thou lovest ...” The very literal reading of the Hebrew text is “See life with the wife whom thou has loved ...” The Hebrew usage of “see” means to experience and enjoy as well as to see.

Thus, what Solomon tells us is very simply this: we can enjoy and experience life more fully in marriage, and a godly wife adds to our ability to see and to understand all things, a godly wife adds to our vision.

This is why Proverbs 31:10ff. speaks of a virtuous woman as the greatest possible wealth. Here again the word translated as “virtuous” has a broader meaning in the Hebrew. It means strength, virtue, valor, and more, and in related forms it sometimes can mean an army. The virtuous woman is not only chaste but a tower of strength: having her is like having a strong power at one’s side. One aspect of her strength is her speech: “She openeth her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue is the law of kindness” (Prov. 31:26).

Conversely, of a woman who is not a source of strength to her husband all that can be said is, “She openeth her mouth.” In fact, Scripture tells us that a nagging wife is as useful as a leaking roof: “A continual dropping in a very rainy day and a contentious woman are alike” (Prov. 27:15).

What Adam said of Eve is very important: “This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh” (Gen. 2:23). What he meant was that he found himself and realized his own potential in having her. She was fully a part of him and his calling, so that she was like his bones or skeleton, which are necessary for a man to stand and move. She was flesh of his flesh, fully a part of his life, so that being alive meant life with her.

Marriage is a very great blessing when it is in terms of God’s law. It increases our vision and strength, and our ability to function under God. It enables us to “see life.”

## The Straightness of God's Rule

In Hebrews 1:8, Paul tells us that God's scepter is a "sceptre of righteousness." The word translated as "righteousness" is *euthutetos*, meaning strictness, straightness, rigidity, and rightness. It is not the usual word for righteousness or justice but a stern and severe word that implies what Malachi 3:6 tells us: "I am the LORD, I change not." It means that God "is the enemy of looseness and compromise with evil," as Ernest Gordon said.

For too long, many people have regarded God as an indulgent grandfather whose children can do no wrong. As a result, we have had a sentimental and flabby church which, despite the number of people in it, is too often impotent and irrelevant. We need to remember that the Puritans were only four percent of the population when they commanded England. Because they saw God as a Lord of unchanging straightness, they gave God the same kind of service.

But notice that in Hebrews 1:8 we are told that God the Father tells God the Son, "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom." It is a perversion of Scripture to read the Old Testament era as a time of law and wrath and the New Testament as only grace and peace. The triune God is the same yesterday, today, and forever, and His grace as well as His stern straightness are always unchanging.

We may be able to work on one side of our wife's or husband's nature, but we can never do this to God. At all times, we are confronted by the whole of God, who knows everything about us. He is the enemy of looseness and compromise. He is not a half-God, and He does not like half-Christians, the lukewarm peoples (Rev. 3:13–16).

Because we are sometimes limp, wet noodles, we cannot expect God to be so! His is the scepter of straightness.

## Peace Among Ourselves

St. Paul in 1 Thessalonians 5:12–13 commands us to respect, love, and esteem all who are in authority over us “in the Lord.” The foundation of a good life in Christ is a respect for all who are over us in Christ. To be in rebellion against godly authority is to be in rebellion against the Lord.

Then Paul adds, “And be at peace among yourselves.” Peace among ourselves goes hand-in-hand with peace and respect in our relationship to those in authority.

I was at a meeting once, conducted by a fine pastor, who remarked wearily that much time would be wasted by certain men. They would stand to argue and quibble about trifles, and would tax the patience of all. Sure enough, the persons he described took up much time in silly arguments and trifling comments. They were obvious disturbers of the peace and self-appointed guardians of the truth. Paul commands, “[B]e at peace among yourselves.” But many people seem to think that their trifling arguments are worth more than the peace of Christ’s church.

Over the years, I have been amazed at the trifles which are at the heart of many family arguments. Many men seem to think that their wives are incapable of deciding the simplest matter without their superior wisdom, and more than a few women apparently believe their husbands will make fools of themselves without wifely nagging.

Sometimes I have called attention to the absurdity of the original arguments and the sad results which ensued and have asked, “Was it worth it?” The answer often begins, “No, but ...” What they are unwilling to say is, “I want my will to be done.”

The peace Paul commands requires us all to say to the Lord, “Thy will be done.” If we will not say that, no argument will give us peace.

## Remembering God

I knew a man a few years ago who had a most difficult life. He was a successful businessman, moderately wealthy, with a very lovely wife, and children who were a delight to him.

His problem was his in-laws; his wife could not be separated from them, and they despised him. They also lived with him! His father-in-law was once a famous European revolutionist and Marxist; he had fled for his life to America. He was an “intellectual” who despised “greedy capitalistic pigs” like his son-in-law, who supported him. To keep his wife from leaving him, he kept his in-laws, in his own house!

He paid the bills, but most of the time his in-laws ignored him and acted as though he did not exist. Of course, they made all kinds of remarks about degenerate capitalists. This went on for about thirty years!

Of course, you would never put up with anything like this, would you? Then why expect God to do the same? We pay for public schools where our Lord is never mentioned; we have a nation which resents any “intrusion” of our Lord’s concerns into councils of state. We have homes where God is never in mind.

The earth, however, is the Lord’s and the fullness thereof (Ps. 24:1). We live on God’s property, and we are unmindful of Him. We are commanded, “[T]hou shalt remember the LORD thy God” (Deut. 8:18), but we too seldom remember Him outside of church, or even in church.

Now, every time I thought about my friend’s problem with his father-in-law, I wished that I had the power to judge and punish that arrogant ingrate. But the thought comes to me: Is God any the less outraged at our treatment of Him? Has He not made clear in His Word the judgment which comes to all who forget Him? Is it not time to remember the Lord, to be grateful and to be obedient?

## A Story Without an Ending

This is a story without an ending. I have lost track of the people involved, but I doubt that this story will have any ending soon, or a good one. We will call them John and Jane Doe, and Junior. John comes from a fine Christian family; two of the other men in the family are ministers, and John knows his Bible perhaps better than they do. He entered into business and quickly became a modest but firm success. All the same, he sometimes talked of entering the ministry.

Jane Doe you might recognize, if you saw her picture. About ten or twelve years ago, she was that beautiful minor actress in some television programs, whom you saw for a season or two, and then no more. Like hundreds of others, she was good, but not good enough. She loved the life of an actress, all of it. She was not afraid to work, and she loved the glamour and the tinsel. She also loved the seamier side of it, the men pawing her, the flattery of being pursued, the parties with ulterior motives, all of it. In the process, she met and married another hopeful actor; each thought the other's name would help their career. They soon drifted apart; he dropped out of sight permanently, and that was the end of it, except for Junior, who was born about the time no one wanted her for a part.

It was about that time that John met her, was attracted to the glamour of knowing a starlet, and gave her a job. He took her to church, and she soon professed to be born again, and they were married. In about two or three years, she decided that life with John, however comfortable, was strictly dull; being a Christian was dull, and being a mother was dull. She told John that she needed to find herself, that she might return later, and she left him, and divorced him. Junior stayed with John, although legally in Jane's custody. She became a receptionist and quickly rejoined the swinging set she loved.

Twice, in the five years which followed, John met girls at the church who were ready to marry him, on the conditions that Junior be sent to Jane and all contact with Jane ended. Junior despised John as a square; now ten, he had actually robbed John of over \$1,000 in a single act; John pleaded and prayed with Junior; he did everything except spank him and call the police. He never got his money back. Each time John was serious about these girls, Jane reappeared (she checked in regularly) to say that someday soon she would settle down and be back. The church girls dropped John.

John's family and church friends thought it was terrible what Jane was doing to John. The truth is, John was doing it to himself. His love of Jane was a love of the false glamour she represented; it was a way of saying that, although he was incurably a worker by nature, he too was able to command a swinger as wife. His love of Jane betrayed a false love in his heart.

As Solomon saw it, “For as he [a man] thinketh in his heart, so is he” (Prov. 23:7). John’s father was wiser than the rest of the family: he blamed John and called him, because of Scripture, a fool: “Speak not in the ears of a fool: for he will despise the wisdom of thy words” (Prov. 23:9). A word to the wise is sufficient, but fools will despise the very revelation of God, as well as the experience of their own lives.

## Which Savior?

What is it that most men desire, dream about, and long for? The answer is easy: wealth. How to get rich quick schemes, books, and ideas usually have an eager market.

But what is it that most men dislike most readily and try to destroy whenever possible by law or by fraud? The answer is again easy: wealth in others.

The key to this ugly situation, wherein men desire wealth for themselves, yet resent it in others, is sin. Men want the wealth for sinful, not godly, reasons. As a result, when they have it, they are ugly, greedy, selfish, and heedless of God and man.

Similarly, when they do not have it, they are also ugly, greedy, selfish, and heedless of God and man. The viciousness of sinful man is neither improved nor abated by being either rich or poor. The answer is thus neither economic betterment (which cannot make a good man out of a bad one), nor economic leveling, because poverty cannot better character. Only God can.

But since God is not the answer men want, they cannot avoid the alternative. Either a society is established on godly faith and morality, or it is established on sin.

Yesterday, a friend sent me some clippings from his hometown in the East. Before World War II, this town of 9,500, mostly made up of poor working people, had only two police officers, and one of them was hired by the railroad to police the railroad shops. The two policemen had nothing to do. Real crime was unknown, and most people were churchgoers.

Today, the old faith is gone, and hoodlums have made this small city an ugly place to live in. Federal funds are now being allocated to “rehabilitate” the people and the city, as though the federal officials can be man’s savior!

The issue is clear-cut: either some agency of man or some branch of civil government is man’s savior, or Jesus Christ is. If it is man or the federal government, we had better turn over our lives to them and be saved. If Jesus Christ is alone our Savior, how then can we dare look for salvation from any other? How can we presume to commit ourselves to any other plan of salvation without His condemnation?

## National Defense

Psalm 127 is about national defense. We are three times told that human efforts without God are “vain” or futile. The primary defense of a people is to make the Lord the builder of the community. This means believing and obeying His law-word.

Then the Psalmist tells us that children are the best weapons system whereby we can command the future for the Lord. First, they are an inheritance from God, and a reward. Second, they are described as “arrows in the hand of a mighty man,” as weapons of war. We are called to serve God and to be His instruments in holy warfare so that the Kingdom of God might be established. A key weapon in this warfare is the child.

We are used to thinking of children in personal terms, in terms of our satisfaction, carrying on the family name and work, and being a joy to us in our old age. All that is good, but here God tells us that children are above all the means whereby God’s Kingdom is furthered. They are weapons of war for the Kingdom of God.

Third, we are told that men who rear godly children shall prosper. “[T]hey shall speak with [or shall subdue, give judgments to] the enemies in the gate.” The city gate was the location of the market in those days, and also the city council and court; all decisions and trials had to be open and public. When parents rear godly children, they dominate and govern both commerce and civil government in due time.

In brief, we are told that godly homes and children are the best form of national defense. How strong are we as a people?

## “That Thy Days May Be Long”

When the Ten Commandments require the honor of parents from us, they tell us also that God promises long life to the peoples and nations which keep this law.

To honor parents (and grandparents) means to honor our source of life, and we can receive little from those whom we do not respect. To gain honor, we must give honor where honor is due (Rom. 13:7).

There is more to this. A society which does not honor parents, its past, will not treat with respect its children, the future. Such a society will be prone to national and personal debt living. Its premise is, “Let the future pay,” which is a sign of contempt for children and grandchildren. I believe there is a correlation between the weakness and decline of Christian faith and the rise of national debts. In fact, at one time, national debts did not exist. They are an “invention” of the modern age, and one of its greatest curses.

The world was not empty when we came into it; we must not leave it emptier for having been here. Our duty is to leave it richer and better because we have shown our gratitude to the Lord by being productive Christians. As a working premise, we are told, “Owe no man any thing, but to love one another” (Rom. 13:8). Instead of decreasing the bounty and richness of God’s earth, we must increase it. Then indeed we have the promise, as persons and nations, of long life on God’s earth (Exod. 20:12).

## Honor Thy Father and Mother

In a college classroom, before the instructor arrived, an angry student was expressing his disgust because his grandfather, with whom he was living, would not let him use his BMW. He declared, “I hope he croaks soon so that I can get the car.” Other students began to make similar statements about their grandparents. Then a young-looking grandmother in the class spoke up to say, “Has it occurred to any of you that you will be grandparents someday?” There was silence, but no repentance.

God tells us, in the Ten Commandments, “Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee” (Exod. 20:12). This law is a promise of life for obedience, and of death for disobedience. A society that has no respect for parents has no future, because to despise or neglect our past is to show contempt for our source of life, and for life itself: past, present, and future. Paul calls this the first commandment with the promise of life, meaning by first, the basic one (Eph. 6:2–3). On the human scene, this is the basic law. It sets the temper for the whole of life.

Something is radically wrong with a society which furthers disrespect for parents and for the basic institution of family. It is important to remember, as Otto Scott has pointed out, that a decadent society is one which can no longer defend itself. That defense begins with the family.

## The Fright Peddlers

I read something last night which took me back to my school days, to the earlier years of elementary school, but not very pleasantly. It was a statement by a prominent “authority” that we have only enough coal, oil, and gas in the world’s reserves to last another twenty years. I recall hearing that statement fifty years ago in a classroom! I was also told that the new weapons of warfare would lead to the obliteration of the human race if a second world war began, and that man’s hope was in something called, I think, the Kellogg-Briand Peace Pact, which almost all nations signed, promising to end all wars, and in the League of Nations. In fact, I heard quite a few horror stories in school about what was going to happen to the human race unless something or other was done. Since then, the world has gone from bad to worse, sometimes because of some of the answers then proposed!

But our children and grandchildren still get the same horror stories, and college classrooms are full of them. We are running out of gas and oil (although some good “authorities” less publicized say we have enough for at least 2000 years); we are running out of air, space, and everything, or so it is claimed. All of this, besides being false, breeds fear and hopelessness. It exalts some scientific planners as the only ones with the answers, and it makes the rest of us a herd of cattle headed for the stockyards, unless we listen to them.

Above all else, it exalts the power of man to destroy, and it produces the fear of man. And this is sinful. God demands of us, “[W]ho art thou, that thou shouldst be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man which shall be made as grass; And forgettest the LORD thy maker...?” (Isa. 51:12–13).

The creation of the world and its government is the work of the Lord, and it is not in His declared plan that man will destroy it. The fright peddlers are giving too much power to man. It is God’s power they need to recognize, not man’s. If man is the basic power, then the answers must come from man, but if God is the sovereign power, then the answers must come from God, and none other. God has provided the answers, and they are in His Word. Our problem is that men pay no attention to them.

## The Christ Child

Every now and then, I hear some foolish couple say that they hesitate to have children. After all, they tell me, this is no world to bring up a child in. We can be grateful that God did not feel that way, and that the Son of God was born into this world when it was much, much worse.

No world for a child? What do they want in a child? A permanent hothouse plant? Someone to be protected from all problems and testings?

The Bible tells us that children are like weapons in the hands of a mighty man (Ps. 127:4), a means of conquering the world for the Lord, and of exercising dominion over all things in Christ's name.

Some people have advocated dropping all testing for children in schools: now many feel life is too much for a child to take!

The glory of the Christmas story is that the Christ child marks a new beginning in the world, a new humanity and a new creation. Christ as the last Adam came as a child to start a new and godly race. He summons us to come to Him by faith, to be a new creation, and to yield ourselves and our children to His lordship and Kingdom.

We therefore in Christ rear our children, not for a hopelessly evil world, but for Christ's Kingdom, for a new creation, of and for which they must be faithful conquerors and members.

Because the Christ child has come, all our children in Christ have a glorious life before them in time and eternity.

No world to bring up a child in? Very true, but only if you are bringing up your child only for this world! The world we bring up our children in is God's world, and Christ is our Savior, Lord, and King. For Him, we can bring up our children in this world, and joyfully so.

## Trees and Babies

Recently, when I was in Fairfax County, Virginia, the Reverend Robert L. Thoburn called an interesting fact to my attention. In that county, it is illegal to cut down a tree, on your property or elsewhere, any kind of tree, without a permit.

(Just recently, a severe windstorm had blown down many trees. I wondered if the county fathers had issued a citation against God.)

A permit is needed to cut down a tree, Mr. Thoburn pointed out, but no permit is required to murder unborn babies by means of abortion.

This ugly contrast says much about many people today. They hate God and His law, and they legalize murder in defiance of Him. Also, they hate man with a passion, while professing love, and they feel triumphant about murdering unborn babies while sparing the life of trees.

Remember, Charles Manson could not bear to see his followers kill insects or rattlesnakes and went into a tantrum over any such incident. All the same, he could order the murder of fellow human beings.

The love of animals and trees is too often a facade for a violent hatred of people, of humanity. It is a means of disguising hatred with a facade of nature-love or ecological concern. I know all too many people who despised nature five and ten years ago but are now great champions of ecology, because it is the newest way of hating man and of despising godly society.

Solomon was right: “An hypocrite with his mouth destroyeth his neighbour” (Prov. 11:9). The hypocrite’s words are always dishonest. They are a front for malice and murder, and our newly “converted” nature-lovers are really man-haters who use the idea of a love of nature to further their hatred of man.

Their ultimate hatred, of course, is against God, simply because not they, but He, is God. How these hypocrites would love to remake all creation after their own image and dreams. But the Lord, who made all things, governs all things, and it is His purpose and plan which shall prevail. And that purpose includes certain judgment for all murderers.

## Power Poles

When I was a boy on a California farm, I recall the day one of the first local farms was electrified, and a powered irrigation pump installed. The proud farmer said, of the power poles and lines, “Isn’t that a beautiful sight?” Well, now we have many telling us how ugly such things are. We had better not forget that farmer’s point of view: the power lines meant light and water in the house, and better irrigation in the fields, and he was grateful and pleased. Too many today act as if any evidence of growth and progress is a crime.

Let us agree that power lines are not the most beautiful sight in the world, but let us not forget that they replaced something very inadequate and have been responsible for great strides in human welfare. I do not believe that anyone is qualified to make a judgment about power lines and poles who is not first of all grateful for what they represent. The roots of this problem lie deep: ungrateful men who will not give thanks to God will be ingrates in every area of life and without the ability or capacity to appreciate anything: power lines, farmers, parents, their heritage, the Word of God, nothing has any value in their sight except themselves.

In Psalm 95:2, we are told that, as we approach God, “Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise unto him with psalms.” When we are grateful to the Lord, then we are grateful men in every area of life, because we are aware of how much we have received. As St. Paul reminded the Corinthians, “For who maketh thee to differ from another? And what hast thou that thou didst not receive? Now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?” (1 Cor. 4:7).

We need to look around us with gratitude for what we have received, and we need to work under God to increase that heritage. The world was not empty when we were born into it, and we sin if we leave it poorer or emptier because we have been here.

True conservation begins and ends with thanksgiving, and with a spirit of gratitude to God, and to other men. Grateful men are not destroyers.

## Profane Living

Recently I talked with a nurse in the emergency hospital of a city of 250,000 people, one of the strongest church cities of America. In two years of night service there, she reported only once had she heard someone who was going to the operating table pray, or even call out to God. Instead, she had heard a great deal of profanity and fear. Yet very many of these people were church members.

The meaning of this is plain enough. For these people God is to all practical intent nonexistent or dead. They have church memberships but not Christian minds. When they need God most, they do not remember to think of Him.

Is it any wonder that we have had a “God is dead” philosophy in recent years? The Word of God is not remembered and applied in church, state, school, family, or vocations. Men go their way, regarding all things as secular, and almost nothing as sacred. There is too little faith in the living God.

We cannot expect any change in our drift towards anarchy until we end our profane ways. The word “profane” means “outside the Temple,” that is, separated from God and living in isolation from Him. If any area of our lives is separated from God and is not governed by His Word, that area is profane, and we are profane.

This means that our worst profanity today is not the use of foul language but our casual living apart from God. It is this deeper and more basic profanity which is eating away at our well-being and our national security. The United States, like almost all nations, has become profane. It lives in separation from God’s Word.

One of the dictionary definitions of “profanation” is “misuse, misapplication.” Exactly so. Man, having been made to enjoy God and to glorify Him forever, misuses and misapplies his life when he separates himself from God. Just as verbal profanity is a misuse of language and an abuse of it, so profane living is a misuse of ourselves and an abuse of our lives. It is the deliberate severing of ourselves from the fountain of life, and a choice of death as a preferred way. Profanity, like all sin, fails to make good sense.

Agreed? Then why not eliminate the profane aspects of our life?

## The Needed Change

This last week, in driving the length of our state, I visited many beautiful farm towns in the valley and in the foothills. The changes were not good to see.

One very fine town that, twenty-five years ago, rarely had a law enforcement problem and where people left their doors unlocked, now has some purse-snatching cases. In another town, there was a break-in by a thief while we slept. In still another, the discussion was about a pornographic, X-rated movie, which was drawing long lines of people in that town every day.

Moreover, I find similar problems in small towns and cities all over the country. The big cities are far worse.

Will stricter law enforcement help? We need it, and it will help a little, but not for long. How can you eliminate pornography from the theaters, when you have it in the hearts of the people? The long lines tell us something about the change in the people as well as the law. Or how can you decrease theft, when all too many people have larceny in their hearts? With all too many people, anything you can get away with is legitimate.

A farmer, with whom I grew up, had his trees cut down when he was away, apparently because he fought against the enforced unionization of farm workers. When I lecture at schools and colleges, I find very few students or teachers who feel that the farmer was wronged. In fact, they will angrily justify the violence used against him. With people like these, we can expect exactly what we are getting in the way of lawlessness, and much more.

A change of laws will not change people. What we need is a change of religion, from humanism or worship of man which governs church, state, and school, to Christianity. Not only do we need a change of religion but a religious change in men—conversion—so that, with a changed people we can have a changed society.

Above all else, the changes must begin with us. Take a good, hard look at yourself. The mirror to use is the Bible. It will not flatter you, but it can change you and make you over into a new man. Try it. Your family might like it!

## Wisdom

The other night, after I spoke at a meeting, a college professor told me of the ignorance of college students today with respect to history and religion. This ignorance is common to all, Protestant, Catholic, and atheist. For example, in a test on historical knowledge, a Catholic student identified Mohammed as the first pope; a Protestant declared that Peter was the god of the Jews. The students were not concerned about their ignorance; good and evil were really unimportant to them; their one principle was this: “Don’t do anything that will hurt people.” They felt little need to learn more than this.

Their faith, whatever they called themselves, was obviously humanism. Man must never be hurt or offended; God was not in their thinking. They obviously lacked wisdom and understanding.

The heart of wisdom, according to Scripture, is instruction (Prov. 1:2–3). The companion word to instruction in the Bible is reproof, correction, or discipline (Prov. 1:23). Moreover, “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: a good understanding [or, success] have all they that do his commandments” (Ps. 111:10).

The humanism of the students, by making man the standard, has eroded both knowledge and morality. If man is our god, then outside knowledge is unnecessary for man. His own existence is all he needs to know, and his wishes are his only law and morality.

Moreover, the new law, “Don’t do anything that will hurt people,” is a charter for violence, not love. Because no law of God is recognized to restrain man, pure egoism then prevails. In practice, “Don’t do anything that will hurt people,” becomes simply, “Don’t do anything that will hurt or offend me, or else, I’ll stomp you.”

Humanism leads to ruthless egoism and immoralism. It produces the kind of ignorance the professor reported, and the growing moral anarchy our newspapers daily describe. It professes the love of man, but practices hatred of men other than one’s self.

It is high time to toss out the humanism in church, state, and school, and in our hearts, and to turn again to the Lord. Our hearts are in need of instruction, reproof, and regeneration. We are ignorant, and our ignorance begins with the ignorance of God and His Word. The Lord summons us to learn and live.

## Trashiness

One of the things which never ceases to amaze me is man's capacity for hypocrisy. I was reminded of this recently when I heard someone ranting about pollution and railing against corporate polluters, car owners, farmers, and everyone he could think of. The only way to describe him was to call him filthy. He was a trashy person who dropped trash with no compunctions while demanding a clean environment.

Unusual? Not at all. Each year, the trashing of city streets and the countryside increases. We live in a day when people dirty up the world while demanding a clean one.

The Bible has a telling sentence on this: "There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet is not washed from their filthiness" (Prov. 30:12). Trashy people lead trashy lives and create a trashy world. This trashing begins in their own souls: if their lives are trashy, their actions will be the same.

When man turns away from the Lord to live "his own life," he has turned from the glory of God to his own sinful person. This is the great act of trashiness, and it affects the total life of man. If the life and environment of our souls is sin, then, whatever we may claim, our preferred way of life will be trashy. We may hypocritically profess high standards, but we will demand them of others, not ourselves. However rich or powerful we may be, we are then trashy men. We may profess to be pure in our own eyes, but we refuse to be washed of our filthiness by the Lord, because dirt is then our way of life.

Adam trashed up Eden by his sin, and had a sentence passed on to him: "[D]ust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return" (Gen. 3:19). Unless our nation repents, a like sentence will be passed on us.

## Is the Underdog Always Innocent?

One of the most common of modern opinions is that the underdog, or the group discriminated against, is innocent. Throughout history, all kinds of groups, races, nationalities, and classes have been the target of discrimination. Does this mean they were necessarily innocent, or necessarily guilty?

Today, we have some who plead, "I've been discriminated against," as though this meant they were innocent and virtuous. Others are equally ready to insist that there is always good reason for discrimination.

Neither form of thinking is valid; both lead to bad judgment. Both constitute unrighteousness in judgment. Leviticus 19:15 is to the point: "Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment: thou shalt not respect the person of the poor, nor honor the person of the mighty: but in righteousness shalt thou judge thy neighbour."

What the Lord requires us to recognize is that righteousness in a man, or unrighteousness, is not a product of class, wealth, race, discrimination, or any other social or environmental fact. Unrighteousness or injustice is a product of sin, not social status, and righteousness is a product of faith and the character of faith.

We are not to think of the underdog as necessarily innocent or guilty, nor of any class or race in such terms. Sin is common to all the sons of Adam, and all men are called into the covenant of the Lord and Redeemer. Guilt and innocence are personal facts.

The goal of judgment is righteousness, and righteousness and justice are in the Bible one and the same word. There is no difference between them. Our judgments must be premised, Scripture makes clear, not on the conditions of men, nor their race or status, but on the Word of God, applied as the yardstick to the acts of all men.

In terms of that Word, all men apart from Christ, and outside His covenant grace, are judged unrighteous. In terms of that Word, all men, believers and unbelievers alike, are held accountable before God. Our standards are thus unacceptable and unsound. Only one kind of judgment is valid and stands. Hence our Lord declares, "Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment" (John 7:24).

## Chaos vs. Order

Very often, as we read past literature, we do so with minds geared to the present. As a result, we view things from a modern perspective, not in terms of the reality of past events. An example of this is in Shakespeare's play *Othello*. When as a result of Iago's lies, Othello begins to suspect that his wife Desdemona is guilty of adultery, he cries out, concerning his suspicion and sudden revulsion, "Chaos is come again."

Modern readers assume this means a personal chaos. However, as Othello's words later indicate, it meant for him that "an act of unchastity meant a denial of the whole social order," to quote Henry Bamford Parkes' analysis of it.

There is an important meaning here. For us, adultery is merely a personal betrayal, and its scope is limited to the family. For Shakespeare, brought up with the use of the Bible and compulsory attendance at the Church of England, marriage was viewed in terms of Ephesians 5:21–33, as a union typifying the union of Christ and His church, and as the foundation of human society. Adultery was thus not only treason to the social order but an act of anarchy. Hence Othello's cry, "Chaos is come again."

The basic unit of life under God had been betrayed, and hence Othello's reaction. Was this simply an old-fashioned perspective which Shakespeare echoed, or is it still a true one?

Anyone who has counseled persons who are confronted with adultery and the betrayal of a marriage covenant know how similar the reactions of a betrayed person today are to Othello's. To break the basic relationship of human life is to commit an act of chaos and to shatter a God-given order. Each of us, in our marriages, either further godly order by what we do, or we become instruments of anarchy and chaos.

## Is the Family Finished?

In a study book published by the National Council of Churches in 1965, Colin W. Williams declared that, while warnings against the “new morality” were important, all the same “it seems equally clear that the ‘new morality’ does point to new conditions which are forcing upon us a radical reconsideration of time-honored attitudes.” One of the things up for “radical reconsideration” is the family. “The family is no longer as it is pictured in the New Testament ... [T]he New Testament family is the primary institution of society, and to it the church has its primary relation.” But this kind of family, and its importance, is gone in our modern world, forever gone.

Is this true? Has the family lost its primary importance? Is it now, like tribal life, a thing of the past, unless we subject it to the “radical reconsideration” of the “new morality”?

There are many who say that the family has lost most of its functions in the past century. The world has changed, and the family is less important to it, we are told. Once women were very important to the family’s economy, and children also, but this is less and less true, it is claimed.

A Harvard sociologist, Carle C. Zimmerman claims otherwise: “The family still has its same functions, only in a different world ... Family life means more now than it ever did and we need it more.” Farming is still farming, Zimmerman says, even though the farmer now uses a tractor and a truck instead of a team of mules; similarly, the family is still the family, and more important than ever, even though some of its ways have changed. In the basic things, the family is unchanged: the duties of parents, of husband and wife, and the obligations of children remain the same. “[T]hose who wish the fundamental family can get it, protect it and have it,” and most do. Moreover, the family is the primary institution of society. The fact that the intellectuals neglect it does not make it any less important. The sun will not lose its importance in our lives if university professors neglect it, and neither will the family perish because of their neglect.

The family, Zimmerman points out, not only fulfills its basic functions, but it has functions we seldom consider. It is, for example, any country’s best police force: it protects its children by training and supervision from criminals and perverts, and it polices and disciplines millions of youngsters daily. Also, Zimmerman points out, “The family is still the best educator.” Moreover, “the family is still and will remain our great protective institution, from the cradle to the grave.” The more difficult the world gets, the more responsibilities the family assumes to protect itself in a trying world; “the family has not lost functions but, rather, has gained them.”

The family system is God-ordained and cannot perish. It has survived the fall of Rome, the passing of empires, world wars and civil wars, depressions and inflations, and it is still here. It is

the primary institution of society. The family and marriage are more basic than church or state. God ordained marriage in Eden, and it is the only institution whose origin is in paradise, and when entered into and kept in terms of God's law, it is still man's happiest estate.

It is not the family that is finished, but its critics. The family is the basic reality of man's life. When men lose touch with reality, they lose touch with life, and they are finished. Their course of action is then insane and suicidal. St. Paul declared that the commandment to honor one's parents, the family commandment, "is the first commandment with promise," and its promise is the good life, and a long one (Eph. 6:1-3).

# Discipline

A couple once complained in my presence about poor results with their daughter, “in spite of all our discipline.” The girl was pregnant out of wedlock, insolent, consistently in trouble, and a constant problem to her parents.

They were wrong, however. They had never disciplined their daughter. They had only punished or chastised her. There is a very great difference between discipline and punishment. Punishment is often very necessary, but it cannot be a substitute for discipline.

The word “discipline” is related to the word “disciple,” which comes from the Latin *disco*, to learn. Discipline is not punishment. Rather, it is systematic learning. The girl in question had never been disciplined. At seventeen, she could not cook, sew, keep her room clean, did not know how to study, read very poorly, could not spell, and, while having a good mind and physical attractiveness, was generally worthless. She had grown up without discipline, although she had received more than a little punishment. Quite naturally, the results were bad. The parents had done nothing to guide her into systematic learning. They had only whaled away at her when her behavior upset them.

The confusion between discipline and chastisement has become so common to our society that the meaning of the word “discipline” has itself begun to change. When Noah Webster put out his dictionary in 1828, the primary meaning of discipline was “education; instruction; cultivation and improvement, comprehending instruction in arts, sciences, correct sentiments, morals and manners, and due subordination to authority.” Only his fifth, sixth, and seventh meanings referred to chastisement.

It is interesting to see how this definition of discipline as chastisement crept in. The confusion began in the church a few centuries ago. The basic and true discipline of the church is the teaching of the Word of God and the requirement of submission to the authority of God and His Word. As the church faltered and failed in its task to “make disciples of all the nations” (Matt. 28:19 ASV), it substituted for teaching or disciplining an insistence on punishment. But punishment without a prior discipline is futile. The Greek word in Matthew 28:19 which is translated as “teach” or “make disciples” is *matheteno*, and disciple is *mathetes*, which means a learner. It comes from the root *math* which means thought accompanied by effort. The word “mathematics” comes also from the Greek *mathematikos*, which means disposed to learn. Mathematics involves thought, drill, and memorization. The word “mathematics” comes from the Greek, and “discipline” comes from Latin, but both refer to the same kind of learning.

The girl in question had been abundantly punished, but she had not been disciplined. She had been overprivileged in terms of material provisions, but underprivileged in terms of being taught and being required to learn. She had been without discipline. Incidentally, she flunked math.

## The Trouble with Statistics

The trouble with statistics is that people take them too seriously, and much of the time they are meaningless. At their best, they give us a distorted picture.

Take, for example, the statistics on marriage and divorce. They seem to imply that marriage in America is becoming a disaster. Is this really true? First of all, some years ago statistics excluded many minority groups. For example, American Indians did not go through American legal processes to marry and divorce until World War II. Before that, native customs and, in some tribes, polygamy prevailed. Because the army gave only one allotment check per husband, the war quickly ended polygamy, and American legal forms began to grow among Indians. One result was an increase in the number of divorces reported statistically. Nothing had changed: the statistics were now more inclusive and thus made the situation “worse.”

Second, statistics give only a numerical story; they do not reveal strength. While divorces indeed have increased, a polarization has taken place. Weak marriages break up more readily, but stronger marriages are more in evidence than ever before.

Millions more parents are now paying for Christian schooling for their children than was the case forty and fifty years ago. These all represent stronger families than America has seen for more than a century. A longer life expectancy means that more elderly people are alive now than was the case fifty and one hundred years ago. Millions of them are cared for by their families.

Much more can be said, but it is sufficient to summarize the matter thus: the family, where it is Christian in faith and practice, is now remarkably strong and getting stronger daily. Stop looking at the disaster cases. The truth is that we are witnessing the rebirth of family power. The very problems and moral delinquencies of our day are bringing more and more families to a rigorous grounding in the fundamentals of faith and family life.

I know all about the sexual revolution and the attacks on the family. I also know that the strength of the family is growing. The commandment to honor our parents is one which promises life for obedience (Eph. 6:1–3; Exod. 20:12).

## Opinions

One of the things that never fails to amaze me is the fact that so many people are so self-important. They decide what God should be like, and therefore God must be so! If you tell them that their opinion has no basis or foundation in the Bible or anything else, they will answer, “Well, I have a right to my own opinion.” Yes, and God has a right to His “opinion” of such people, and it is His view that counts.

About sixty or more years ago, a foolish woman asked Dr. John Henry Jowett what he thought about God. Jowett answered quietly, “Madam, I think the question is, What does God think about me?” More people today need to be concerned with that question instead of their own opinions.

The Bible tells us that “[t]he fool hath said in his heart, There is no God” (Ps. 14:1). It also tells us that all who try to fashion a god after their own desires and needs are “vanity” or foolishness, and they shall in time be put to shame (Isa. 44:9).

Our opinions do not make God, nor do they count before Him. For a man to imagine that God must be what a man’s thinking demands is more than foolishness: it is insanity. All around us, people tell us that they have a right to their own opinion and go on to insist that their opinion is right, and God’s Word is wrong!

There is a difference between opinions and truth. Neither a majority nor a minority opinion, nor an educated or uneducated opinion, is of any necessity the truth. The Lord is the truth (John 14:6), and it is God’s Word that is the truth (John 17:17). We need to conform ourselves and our opinions to God’s truth, and to have the common sense to know that our opinions can perhaps be forced on our wives, but never onto God!

## Idolatry

One of the things most severely condemned in the Bible is idolatry. Idolatry means worshipping any god other than the Lord; it means worshipping man-made gods. Every false god is something created by man, either by his hands or by his mind, whereas the living God is beyond man's ability to conceive or to represent. When man tries to live his own life in independence from God, he is guilty of idolatry: he has made himself his own god. Man's original and basic sin is to be his own god, knowing, or determining for himself, what constitutes good and evil (Gen. 3:5). This is why St. Paul sees conversion as a turning to God from idols (1 Thess. 1:9).

Idolatry is also declared to be faithlessness to the living God, and it is therefore described as adultery. Those who serve anyone other than God the Lord are declared over and over again to be guilty of whoredom.

Idolatry thus, from the Biblical point of view, is not merely an ancient practice but a present fact. Every man who lives for himself, and who lives by his own word rather than the Word of God, is an idolater. He has made himself his own god, and his own word, or the word of the mob, his scripture. This is man's great sin, and all other sins spring from this one. Hence, the first and key commandment of the ten is "Thou shalt have no other gods before me" (Exod. 20:3).

To cleanse our lives and our homes of idols means above all else to dethrone ourselves. It is not our will but the Lord's which must be done. It means that not we but God is the Lord. This is the meaning of the Apostle John's earnest plea, "[K]eep yourself from idols" (1 John 5:21).

## A Good Conscience

Billy Graham's column recently was an answer to a letter from a woman who wrote, "I am a forty-three-year-old woman trying to become a better Christian. I know God forgives our sins, but when I was twelve or thirteen, I used the Lord's name in vain in a moment of anger. Although I asked for forgiveness, I have a haunting fear that I'll always be charged with violating that commandment."

Graham's answer was theologically sound, but having never been a long-term pastor, I think he missed the point of the letter. The woman was not confessing. She was really bragging about how tender and sensitive her conscience was. I have heard many such "confessions" from church members and unbelievers, about having stolen a pencil in the second grade, using a dirty word at the age of nine, stealing an apple at the age of eleven, and so on, all of which was supposed to make me think what a sensitive soul I was dealing with.

I soon came to realize that I was dealing with very hard consciences and hypocrites who believed their hypocrisy. Are you sure, I would ask, that you have not committed more serious sins in the last month, or week or day? If I ask your husband, wife, family, or friends, will they report some very real sins that mark your life today?

When I catalogued to one supposedly very super-sensitive woman her current and very ugly sins, none of which she could deny, I had as mad a woman on my hands as I have ever seen.

The point is that people who try to lie to a pastor or to others about their spiritual state are first of all lying to themselves and to God. They may believe their own lies, and they usually do, but God never does. "[T]he righteous God trieth the hearts and reins" (Ps. 7:9). Through Jeremiah, God declared, "Behold, I will melt them, and try them" (Jer. 9:7), that is, God will put the total life of men and nations to the test and into the refining fire.

A truly tender and sound conscience is alive to the duties and responsibilities of today, to the opportunities God provides us each new morning, and to the requirements He makes of us here and now.

A fallen or evil conscience is tied to the past, and the hypocrite, as a fallen man, apes this past-bound orientation of an evil conscience. The unregenerate man's conscience cannot cope with today's moral decisions because he is sick at heart over the past. He is not a new creation, with forgiveness and grace radiating through and cleansing his being. He drags around the dead corpses of stale sins.

What is your conscience like?

## The Spiritual Man

As time passes, words change their meaning and often come to mean something very different from their earlier intent. In Shakespeare's day, the word "honest" meant sexually chaste; now it refers to a general truthfulness and dependability.

At other times, words remain somewhat the same in their general meaning, but with a dramatically different intention. "Spiritual" is one such word. Paul in Romans 7:14 says, "For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin."

The word "spiritual" is, in the Greek original, *pneumatikos*; it does refer to nonmaterial reality, but even more, to power. To say God's law "is spiritual" is to say that it is powerful beyond man's ability to imagine. It has all the power of God and His heavenly hosts behind it. In this sense, the spiritual man is the most powerful man; he is not a pale and weak figure on the sidelines of life, but God's mover and shaker.

Paul then continues, "[B]ut I am carnal, sold under sin." "Carnal" in the Greek is *sarkikos*, meaning physical and weak. Today, carnal tends to mean sexually oriented, for Paul it meant weak, this worldly, and merely physical. It is for this reason that the carnal man is "sold under sin"; he is dominated by his weakness and his sin.

This explains why for Paul all spiritual men are "more than conquerors" in Christ (Rom. 8:37). We tend to see the spiritual as ghostly and ethereal, whereas Paul sees it as supernaturally powerful. Again, we, because of our implicit humanism, tend to view the carnal as very powerful, whereas Paul sees it as weak.

In other words, we transfer power from the spiritual realm to the physical, and we thereby warp our perspective on things. Our sense of reality is then warped, and, in our blindness, we remain in bondage to sin and evil.

## Rejoice

Over the years, one of the more common things I have heard is the description of someone beginning with these words: “He’s a good man, but ...” or, “She’s a good woman, but ...” followed by a list of qualifications.

Some years ago, I knew a woman who was described that way. She was one of the more dedicated members of a particular church, always ready to work, and very capable in whatever she did, but she was also known to be a chronic critic and complainer. Her husband never went to church. A neighbor woman tried once to coax him into going and into becoming a Christian by saying, “You don’t want to be separated from your wife for all eternity when you die, do you?” The man laughed and said: “We won’t be separated. Can you see my wife going where she has nothing to complain about?” Sadly, this kind of complaining mindset is true of too many people.

Paul had this in mind when he wrote, “Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice” (Phil. 4:4). Moffatt renders the second part, “I will say it again, rejoice.” Given Paul’s many painful and ugly experiences, one would think he would be the last man to give such a command—and it is an order to us. Paul, however, thought of the fact that God is always on the throne and He makes all things work together for good to those who love Him, to those called according to His purpose (Rom. 8:28). Paul also believed that all who are the recipients of God’s grace must weigh the present distress against an eternity of triumph. Only with such a trusting and joyful faith, he said, can we know “the peace of God, which passeth all understanding” (Phil. 4:7). Our discontent makes life a hell; gratitude to and joy in the Lord will give us peace under fire.

## Dangerous People

Criminals, rioters, and sexual perverts are dangerous people, but they are normally no problem to a healthy society. If men are by and large godly in their standards, the criminal element is readily controlled.

Problems arise when men become tolerant of evil. The really dangerous people to a society are those who are tolerant of evil. Some such people can become very upset if the wrong kind of wine is served with dinner, but a homosexual dinner guest delights them, if he is clever, witty, and in “good taste.” Others will wince and avoid a man whose grammar is bad, but a man with grammatically correct obscenity does not trouble them, and can amuse them. For all such, sin is appealing, if it has style.

These are the really dangerous people. Their false emphasis on appearance is more deadly to a society than the acts of criminals, because it is this stress on appearances which leads to a tolerance of crime and a breakdown of standards. Nothing is more effective in undermining faith and morals than an emphasis on appearance rather than the faith.

This false emphasis is very much with us, however, even in the churches. Too often pastors are chosen in terms of appearances rather than evidences of faith and dedication. People join churches in terms of their appearances and prestige, rather than their faith.

To give appearances so clear a priority is to say that faith and morality are less important than a facade. It is a way of praising clever wickedness. As Solomon says, “They that forsake the law praise the wicked: but such as keep the law contend with them” (Prov. 28:4).

By what standard do you judge others, by faith or by appearances? Remember, the Lord will judge you by the way your life answers to that question.

## The Judgment of Hypocrites

Our Lord tells us that one mark of a hypocrite is that he is full of advice for others which he himself does not practice. He sees the mote in his brother's eye, but not the beam in his own. It is this kind of false judgment our Lord forbids (Matt. 7:1–5). Our Lord said, we are instead to “judge righteous judgment” (John 7:24).

Let us see practically what this means. A churchman I know has three children: all have become lazy, immoral parasites. He always undercut his wife's attempts at discipline, claiming she “nagged” the kids too much. He always indulged them. Now he blames his wife for their delinquency, claiming that her nagging drove them into rebellion.

On top of that, he always lends money, never returned in most cases, to his worthless brother. He feels quite moral about it and resents his wife's claims that he and his brother are stealing her future security and present benefits. He claims that she is being un-Christian.

At the same time, this man is full of talk about what's wrong in Sacramento and Washington. He hates the “welfare bums” and all the “political graft and handouts.” In short, he is a thorough hypocrite. It is his attitude multiplied and magnified which is responsible for our country's predicament today. This is the kind of judgment our Lord condemned, not righteous judgment. This man's wife makes righteous judgments; his are all hypocritical ones. This man yaps at his wife endlessly, claiming that she is not much of a Christian, because she is judging him, the children, and his brother. In so doing, he is judging her. His judgment is hypocrisy; hers is the righteous judgment our Lord requires.

Are your judgments those of a hypocrite, or of a righteous man? It is impossible to live without making judgments. Do we make them with clean hands, and out of faithfulness to the Word of God, or do we instead judge as hypocrites? God will in time judge all hypocrites, and without mercy.

## Can We Sanctify Folly?

They are a multi-millionaire older couple widely known for their gifts to Christian causes. They regard themselves as good, Bible-believing Christians. They have two children, a boy and a girl, both in their late thirties. They have never given their very fine and godly son a nickel in help; their son was in a serious accident and unable to work for some time, while awaiting an insurance settlement. His wife went to work to support them until he was able to work again.

The daughter is a mess. She has drifted into a few bad marriages, and some other beds as well. She is ready to “try anything”—except Jesus Christ. Her parents feel sorry for her, and they have subsidized her generously over the years. “Life,” they say sadly, has been very rough on their “little girl.” The girl has been rather very rough with her own life!

Now these two people are prominent “Christians.” When they themselves, and many like them, are soft on sin, should we be surprised if judges and juries treat criminals better than their victims are treated? Need we be surprised at all the bleeding heart antics of millions on behalf of the guilty, homosexuals, pornographers, and others? After all, if “Christians” are soft on unrepentant sinners, why should the world be any different?

I once heard a minister claim that there had to be another reading originally to Matthew 18:23–34, where our Lord plainly states that sin must be paid for! The man wanted a cheap forgiveness, and a meaningless grace.

If the world lacks sound judgment in coping with its problems, it is because the church has failed to teach it properly, or to set a godly example. If the world is easy on sinners but hard on the godly, can we complain, if like this older couple, we are the same?

If wisdom and righteousness do not begin at the house of God, then judgment will (1 Pet. 4:17). We dare not sanctify our folly.

## Giving to God

One of the contributing causes of the American War of Independence was the British practice of sending convicted criminals to America. In April 1751, the *Pennsylvania Gazette* protested against this practice, declaring:

When we see our Papers fill'd continually with Accounts of the most audacious Robberies, the most cruel Murders, and infinite other Villainies perpetrated by Convicts transported from Europe, what melancholy, what terrible Reflections must it occasion! What will become of our Posterity! These are some of thy Favours, Britain! Thou art called our Mother Country; but what good Mother ever sent Thieves and Villains to accompany her children; to corrupt some with their infectious Vices; and murder the rest? What Father ever endeavour'd to spread the Plague in his Family! We do not ask Fish, but thou givest us Serpents and worse than Serpents! In what can Britain show a more Sovereign Contempt for us than by emptying their Jails into our Settlements; unless they would likewise empty their Jakes [toilets] on our tables?

The editor was quoting our Lord's words, that no good father would give his child who asked for bread and fish, a stone and a snake (Matt. 7:9–11).

Of course, the matter works both ways. What good son would give his parents an evil return for all their love? Now, what good child of God will give to his heavenly Father only the poorest leftovers of his life, time, and money? If the editor of the *Pennsylvania Gazette*, and many Americans in 1751, found the “gift” of criminals a proof of contempt by Britain towards America, how does God the Lord feel about your gifts and mine? Are we giving gifts which manifest only contempt for our Lord and Savior? If our gifts are poor and evil, are not our hearts evil also?

## Mother Murder

In a startling passage in 1 Timothy 1:9, Paul speaks of the fact that God's law is necessary in a world of sin where people even go so far as to be "murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers." In speaking of mother murder, Paul uses the word *metraloais*, mother-killers or smiters. The use of this word, where known, led to severe punishment by Nero, who had killed his mother.

In the Ten Commandments, we are commanded to honor our father and mother (Exod. 20:12). We do not have a requirement of obedience when we are mature and have our own family, but we have a lifelong duty of honor. This honor is due, not because all mothers are always worthy of honor, but because motherhood is.

Thus we have the antithesis of honor and murder. As Paul uses the word, he means murder, as his next word, "manslayers," makes clear. The word *metraloais* could mean mother-smiters also, referring to physical assault, something also forbidden in the law (Exod. 21:15). Because in Scripture the family is the basic institution under God, any assault on the family, or any dishonor to those to whom honor is due, is seen as a most serious offense. Such crimes strike at the foundation of godly social order.

Thus, neither church nor school, and certainly not the state, has any right under God to undercut the authority of the family. No society has ever been able to survive the destruction of its family life.

The word *metraloais* meant thus not only the actual act of murder but also anything that undercut the godly powers of family life and the authority of the mother. Paul's words are very relevant for our time.

## How to Be a Blessing

One of the most deeply hurt men I ever met was being comforted at his wife's funeral by some of her close friends. One of the women remarked that his late wife, at one of the last women's meetings she had attended, had remarked that it would be hard to find a better man than her husband. The man checked with others at the meeting; they all confirmed the wife's statement.

What hurt and angered the man deeply was this: in all their years of marriage, his wife had complained about one thing or another and always seemed to want more than he was or could provide. "She was a good woman," he said, "but she never seemed to be entirely happy with me or what I did. If only once she had told me what she told those women!"

Paul, in Ephesians 5:4, commands Christians to indulge in "[n]either filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient [or, not fitting]: but rather giving of thanks." The alternative to unclean or foolish language is thankfulness, towards both God and man. But thankfulness, which we all appreciate, is what we are too often least ready to give.

A pastor who took another church in despair of ever accomplishing anything with an unresponsive congregation found himself flooded with Christmas cards a few months later; all bore notes saying, we miss your preaching, we miss you, or we miss your faithful ministry. He wondered if they would be as late in expressing thanks to their new pastor.

Scripture requires us to be thankful to God (Phil. 4:6), and to man. A truly thankful person is a blessing. Because he is grateful to God, he is also grateful to every godly person. Thankfulness means a godly contentment and peace.

To be a blessing we must first of all be blessed. A thankful person is.

## How to Be a Curse

As I travel from coast to coast, I regularly find faithful and weary pastors warning me against some member whom they and the congregation find to be a walking curse to all around them.

Here are some examples. A man, who sees himself as a pillar of the church, seeks out and grills all visitors to the services about their faith and doctrine. He is so sharp and censorious, many never return; others he tells flatly, we don't care for your kind of belief around here. No amount of rebuke from pastor and officers stops him; he was there before most of them, and it is his duty to "save" the church from poor prospects. Another case: A woman has clobbered her pastors for thirty years with her love of religion. Is a man under discipline for adultery? Is a Sunday school teacher, a man, being discharged for a sexual advance to a young girl? She is merciless and unforgiving in her demand that "love" be shown to these offenders, by which she means no action taken, but none of the pastors yet has reported her attitude towards them to be even slightly loving, or even respectful.

If you want to be a walking curse, be censorious: maintain that you have a corner on truth, and then demand that your will be done.

Paul, however, makes clear that authority is important in the life of the church, and he commands Titus to exercise authority and rebuke to further the gospel (Titus 2:15). He then goes on to say to Titus, "Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work" (Titus 3:1).

Where is your readiness? Is it in censorious speech and second-guessing, or is it a readiness "to every good work"?

## Basic Education

Education must be in the basics of life, or else it is miseducation and impoverishment. The three fundamental areas are, *first*, religious education. Since the triune God is the Creator, and the most important fact of life, because He is Life (John 14:6), to neglect Him in our schools is to educate for ignorance.

*Second*, the family is the central and basic institution on earth. It is our first school, church, vocation, government, and much, much more. To be ignorant of the importance of the family is to be educated as a fool. Our fundamental human relationship is all-important to our personal and national well-being. Its neglect is criminal.

*Third*, education must emphasize the basic learning skills. Those skills and knowledge are the tools of everyday life. To educate a child poorly is like sending a soldier into battle without a gun.

This is why the Scriptures stress so strongly the importance of education. In Deuteronomy, we have Moses' summary of God's law for families. In Proverbs, we have instruction for a young man. Throughout Scripture, the instruction of the whole man is stressed.

If we want to perish as a nation, we can do so easily, by neglecting basic education. This is, in fact, what many are doing. We are producing an unfit generation of drugged youth who are stumbling through life towards death. This must be what we want, because too many of us work for it, and pay for it.

## Horror Stories

I do believe that people enjoy scaring themselves over nothing. How else can you explain the frightening and violent drama that comes over television nightly, or that fills the movie screens? For all too many people there is a fascination about horror stories and an appeal to fear. I can recall as a boy how many other boys enjoyed “scary” stories and found a pleasure in being terrified. A really terrifying movie attracted them readily.

I am not against fear as such. Fear has its place in life, when its focus is right. I recall a classmate of mine, now dead, who was discharged from the Air Force because, while very capable, he had no fear. He was thus reckless with multimillion-dollar planes and took foolhardy chances. He was in a real sense a defective person, and he died young. Healthy fear is a warning signal of danger, and it is basic to man’s survival.

But needless fear is equally defective, and to court needless fear is to court a loss of understanding. This desire for needless fear is thus an indication that something is very wrong with our day. To terrify ourselves over monsters from outer space, or spacecraft enemies, or over something fictional and imagined, is about as sensible as starving ourselves when there is food on the table.

Solomon says, “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction” (Prov. 1:7). The fear of the Lord is a healthy and realistic thing. It means that we recognize His sovereign power, and, when we sin, are rightfully fearful. The fear of the Lord is a healthy and productive fear. Fools do not fear God because they despise wisdom and instruction; they have no sense of reality. They invent imaginary things to fear, knowing that they can walk away and forget their fears, rather than facing up to reality and doing something about their sins and shortcomings. The fool gets a pleasure scaring himself over creatures from outer space, and the like, because he can walk away from and know that his fear is groundless. However, when we fear God, we know that it is our sin that makes us afraid (Gen. 3:10). This means that we must do something about ourselves and our relationship to God. It is this fear and knowledge which is the beginning of wisdom.

What are you afraid of? Does your fear lead to knowledge or to foolishness?

## A Bad Teacher

One of the worst of popular ideas is that we can learn by experience, and that experience is a great teacher. Nothing can be further from the truth: Experience is a very bad teacher. An alcoholic learns nothing by getting drunk, nor a gambler by losing, until they bring something other than experience to the situation.

Some bad experiences with men have turned many a woman into a man-hater, and bad experiences with women have made women-haters out of many men. Their experiences were false teachers. A bad experience with churches makes some people haters of Christianity. Has their experience given them any wisdom or insight?

Is it not experience that teaches us but the faith and character we bring to experience. Two people experiencing the same thing can come up with radically different conclusions, because each brings a different outlook to the experience. It is not the experience but the man and his faith that counts. If we overrate experience, we underrate faith and the man.

Hence it is that Solomon counsels, "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life" (Prov. 4:23). The heart, the religious core of man's being, his faith and life, is the key, not experience. If a man's heart be regenerate, experience can then increase his wisdom and insight. However, if his heart is evil, then experience will teach a man nothing but more evil. Experience in itself is not capable of being the teacher, and, when men look to it for learning, they get only a bad teacher.

Look at the world's experience since 1940. How much have men and nations learned from it? They still continue to repeat their old sins and errors, having learned nothing. Until the Spirit of God and His Word teach them wisdom, they will learn nothing. Therefore Scripture counsels us, with all our experience and learning, "Get wisdom, get understanding: forget it not; neither decline from the words of my mouth" (Prov. 4:5).

## The Almighty

One of the great declarations of God, made to Abraham in Genesis 17:1, is “I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect.” We run into trouble in understanding its meaning because of the word “perfect.” In recent years, it has come to mean “sinless” or “flawless.” It obviously did not mean that in the Preamble to the U.S. Constitution, which speaks of “a more perfect union.” The idea of the Union being more sinless or flawless is not in mind. The Biblical and older English meaning of “perfect” is upright, mature. God commanded Abraham to be righteous and mature in his walk before God. God is the Almighty One, who is alone perfection in the modern sense of the word.

Practically, what does this mean? A very sensible woman we know, who has been in real estate as well as banking, has remarked that too many women make themselves miserable trying to find, buy, or build their perfect dream house. A house which meets all our needs 100 percent is impossible. Some of our needs and demands contradict each other. Thus, a kitchen small enough to save steps will be too small to have all the storage and work areas often needed, and so on. If a house meets an exacting person’s requirements up to 80 percent, it is a remarkable one; most of the time, we do very well if 50 to 65 percent of our requirements are met. The mature and upright person does not expect this world to give us 100 percent or 90 percent of what we want. Neither we nor the world are God.

But the Lord is the Almighty One: there is nothing impossible for Him. His salvation is perfect, lacking nothing; His law is all-wise and nourishes and guides our lives. There is nothing too hard for the Lord, and our inheritance in Him is glory itself.

To walk before the Lord in uprightness and maturity means not only to serve Him here faithfully and obediently but also to know that He alone is the Almighty One, all-righteous and all-holy. In the modern sense of the word, He alone is perfect, and we dare not look for perfection in anything other than the Lord. For us to be “perfect” in the Biblical sense means to be righteous before the Lord, walking before Him in faith and obedience, and knowing that we cannot seek for the infallible and faultless outside of Him.

## The Family of Christ

One of the great preachers of all time was James Saurin, pastor of the French church at the Hague. One of his most memorable sermons was on Matthew 12:46–50, “The family of Jesus Christ.”

Saurin spoke strongly against a limited view of the Christian family. It includes more than our loved ones here and in Heaven. He declared, “Our family is composed of the redeemed out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation, of the ambassadors of the Gospel who have turned many to righteousness . . . Our family is composed of those illustrious saints who have fought under the banner of Christ, and they now sit on his throne. Further, our family is composed of those angels that excel in strength, and obey the voice of God, of those cherubim which fly at his command. Our family is composed of those thousand, thousand millions, and ten thousand millions which stand before him and cast their crowns before the throne . . . Jesus Christ is the firstborn of this household.”

This is all very beautiful, but practically, what did it mean? Very simply, it was this emphasis on the family of Christ which led to a burning concern for the poor, needy, and fallen in the cities, for the unconverted overseas, and for those yet to be brought into Christ’s family. It meant too that congregations saw the need to care for one another, because Christ says of His followers, “Behold my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother.”

Here is our Lord’s test: Are you a relative of Jesus Christ? Does He claim you as kin to Him? The requirement is a simple one. We must be His disciples and do the will of our Father in Heaven. Do you see yourself as a member of His family? What is more, does He see you as kin to Himself?

## The Death of a Lady

She died a month ago, and it is difficult to forget her. She was a Christian, an old-fashioned gentlewoman, a lady to the core. When her husband became seriously ill some years ago, it was her belief that he left her well fixed for life financially. However, his long and lingering illness, plus financial complications he could not deal with, wiped him out. She went to work, doing what she could do ably and efficiently, as a maid, in domestic service.

She never complained nor felt sorry for herself. When she went to church, or visited friends, she did so as serenely as in her days of prosperity, always carefully and neatly dressed, and wearing white gloves. She was always a Christian and a lady, and no one to feel sorry for, but someone to respect and appreciate.

The couple she worked for had another baby, and the extra work was too much for her. She had a heart attack, and, in a few days, passed away quietly.

She was a clear example of the truth of St. Paul's words, "[G]odliness with contentment is great gain" (1 Tim. 6:6). Great gain: that means great profit or wealth. She was a rich woman, according to Paul's standard, or, rather God's standard. Most of us prefer to be poor. We choose discontentment, which is neither godliness nor gain, but usually self-pity and misery. We choose to wallow in self-pity and discontent, blame God for our misery, and then demand that He do something about it. Discontentment and self-pity always lead us from bad to worse.

Our friend simply went from one kind of wealth to another, and then to glory. Her's was a marvelous way to live, by faith and in godly contentment. Why not try it?

## The Gospel

We tend to think of the word “gospel” as a Biblical word, but the truth is that the early church borrowed it from the imperial Roman cult of Caesar worship. The word in the Greek of imperial statements and the New Testament is *evaggelion*, the evangel, or gospel, good news, or good tidings.

The gospel Rome proclaimed was the emperor and his power. In one text, which speaks of the birthday of the Emperor August, we read: “The birthday of the god (Caesar) was for the world the beginning of tidings of joy on his account.” We are at once reminded of the angelic choir and its song at the birth of our Lord:

“[B]ehold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people” (Luke 2:10). What the Scriptures and the early church declared, by their use of the word “gospel,” was that all other saviors and all other claims to present good news are false. For the political order to claim that it can provide man with salvation, security, or anything else apart from Jesus Christ is not the good news of salvation but the bad news of damnation. The Christians were making clear to Rome that man’s salvation, social security, and joy, come, not from politics and the entertainment world, but from the Lord of creation and its only Savior.

In other words, the use of this key word, “gospel,” by Christians was an act of war against Caesar. It is comparable to churchmen today taking the term “social security” and using it to declare that man’s only true security is in the Lord, and declaring that the state is incapable of giving anything other than social insecurity to man.

Why did they do this? *First* of all, God did it by first placing the word “gospel” in the mouths of angels as they spoke of Christ’s coming. *Second*, the church did it because as Peter declared to the rulers of his day, “[T]here is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved” (Acts 4:12).

But, third, we too must do it. In every area of our lives, our trust must be in the Lord. He is our only Savior, and our sustainer. There is no other gospel.

## The Failure of Peashooter Religion

Have you ever tried to stop a charging elephant with a peashooter, or to bring down a springing lion with a BB gun? The very idea is, of course, ridiculous, but, all the same, much of the world seems to believe it can be done.

As men face the grim and pressing problems of a bitterly divided world, the problems of communism, anarchy, and lawlessness, they attack them with weapons of the peashooter class. As a result, the problems increase instead of decrease.

The root of the problem is peashooter religion. The Bible declares that man's root problem is that he is a fallen creature, at war with God and therefore at war with himself and his neighbor. Man is thus radically sick, and the name of his sickness is sin. The only cure is regeneration through the grace of God in Jesus Christ, and then growth in obedience to His law-word. As men become strong and disciplined by God's law and obedience to it, they are then able to cope with the problems of our day all of which stem from a radical lawlessness. This is true religion, strong religion.

But peashooter religion has easier and more popular answers. Many peashooter preachers urge us to pass certain laws as the cure-all for everything. Others urge us to be nice to everybody as though being nice to a thief makes him more honest! The peashooter preachers offer every kind of answer except the one God provides, the re-creation of all things in and through Jesus Christ. The peashooter preachers offer us man and man's way, when it is precisely man and man's way which has gotten us into our mess.

Are things bad today? And does the prospect look worse for tomorrow? There is good reason for our ugly situation. Anyone who tries to stop a charging elephant with a peashooter has a very poor future.

Isn't it time we forsook our peashooter religion for the power of God and His Word?

## The Inheritance of Patience

God tests and tries us, says James, that we “may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing” (James 1:4). The word “entire” is in the Greek text *holokeros*, coming from *kleros*, and it means our full inheritance from the Lord. In other words: no patience, no full inheritance. The immature and childish believer does not get his or her full inheritance.

These are strong words. Their beauty in the King James Version makes us forget how plainspoken and blunt they are. James tells us that lack of patience on our part makes us losers before God: we do not get all that He has to give because of our lack of patience, our lack of maturity.

Impatient people are also censorious. They want perfection from all around them in terms of their requirements. They make themselves, rather than the Lord, be judge over all.

We have forgotten how important a virtue patience is, but God does not forget! In earlier generations in the United States, “patience” was so prized a virtue that it was considered a favorite name for girl babies. It was believed that the virtue of patience was a fitting crown for beauty. It is a virtue much neglected in our day, which is one reason why so few have their full inheritance from the Lord.

Try being patient, and surprise your friends and family. Remember, God gives patience an inheritance.

## Love Is of God

About 200 years ago, Jonathan Swift said of the church people of his day that they had “just enough religion to make us hate but not enough to make us love one another.” At the same time, people were very unhappy about any preaching about God’s judgment or God’s hatred of sin. They wanted more preaching about love and reason, but they lacked both, because they wanted love and reason, not the Lord. But Swift was wrong: his age had both little love and little hate in its nature.

John tells us that “love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God” (1 John 4:7). Love is born of a knowledge of God, and a rebirth in the Lord. To seek love apart from God is a mistake: it means the substitution of a humanistic emotion in place of the grace of God and an attribute of God. We see real love, not in our feelings, but in the fact that God loved us, and gave His only begotten Son to us, that we might have life through Him (1 John 4:9–11). The real demonstration of love, John tells us, is Christ’s atonement, the propitiation of our sins.

But God’s love is also manifested in His wrath and judgment. When my children were younger, I was angry at times with them, because I loved them, and hence I was upset over their sins and errors. In the same way, God’s anger is also a witness to His concern for His creature, His covenant, His calling of us. God is not indifferent towards us: His love and wrath are both evidences of His concern for man. A mild “wrath” on God’s part concerning sin would be an indication of little love, and much indifference.

Thus, when Scripture tells us that God is love, it also tells us that He is “a consuming fire” of judgment (Heb. 12:29). The two go together. If we separate them, or concentrate on one or the other, we lose sight of the real and living God in favor of our imagination, and our ideas concerning Him.

## The Everlasting Arms

This happened a good many years ago. One disaster after another hit this woman, so that, one by one, all her family was taken from her in one heart-breaking and sudden grief after another. When it was over, she could not eat nor sleep; sleeping tablets did no good, and she was rapidly becoming a hollow-eyed, incoherent mental case.

Then someone told the new pastor, a big, older man, and he called on her. He took one look at her, picked her up in his arms, headed for a rocker, and rocked her to sleep like a baby, repeating Bible verses to her. From that day on, she had no problem that left her disturbed or shaken, and she was again a strong, stable person.

It was long ago, and I have forgotten his name and hers, but not the Bible verse he taught her: “The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms” (Deut. 33:27). She never needed the pastor’s arms again: she felt secure in God’s everlasting arms and had come to know that, in all things, they are always there.

It was this faith that led David, in time of great danger, when his enemies sought to destroy him, and it seemed as though all men were against him, to say, “What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee” (Ps. 56:3). David’s refuge was God’s everlasting arms.

Many years ago, Elizabeth Akers Allen wrote a poem expressing a longing, “Just for tonight,” to be rocked to sleep by her mother. This was, of course, an impossibility, and for any adult, it would be no real comfort but an embarrassment. The sovereign and almighty God, however, holds us ever in His hands. This should give us more peace and security than any mother ever can. In terms of this, David said, “I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep: for thou, LORD, only makest me dwell in safety” (Ps. 4:8). Can you say the same?

## “Pray Without Ceasing”

Paul in 1 Thessalonians 5:17–18 declares that God’s will for us is that we “[p]ray without ceasing. In every thing give thanks.” To pray unceasingly does not mean spending twenty-four hours daily in prayer. Rather, it means being open continually to God, sharing our thoughts and hopes with Him in mental prayer, and so on. It means, as we face a problem, praying, in a sentence, “Lord, help me with this problem”; or, “Give me patience as I talk with this trying person”; or, “Thank you for seeing me through that mess,” and similar prayers.

O. Hallesby years ago wrote, “We cannot breathe in the early morning in such a way that it will be sufficient until noon. Likewise, we cannot pray in the morning so as to suffice until noon.”

Continual sentence prayers are simply Christian breathing. They keep us alive and strong.

Together with such praying, Paul says, must go thankfulness: “In every thing give thanks.” We resent it when people we help are ungrateful and see no need to thank us. We had better beware of being similarly ungrateful to God. We complain about our troubles to Him. Do we thank Him for our blessings, for loved ones and friends?

The Lord has no use for long-winded prayers. He does expect and require gratitude, and a heart open to Him.

## The Lamp

My associate, Edward A. Powell, has a gift for apt statements. The other day, he remarked that most people expect the big issues to be their problems, and they forget the importance of little things. But big things are rarely a problem: “It’s easy not to rob a bank.” He remarked, but being patient sometimes with people is very difficult. It takes a great deal of grace to cope with little things.

This is exactly why so much of the Bible, for example, the law and Proverbs, deals with our faith in relation to a variety of little problems. We miss the point of much of Scripture if we fail to recognize that it speaks not only to the great issues of salvation, but also to the many little issues of daily life. “For the commandment is a lamp; and the law is light; and reproofs of instruction are the way of life” (Prov. 6:23).

We are so used to streetlights now, and farm floodlights, that the meaning of the Bible is lost here. Some of us remember the days of kerosene lamps, and going out to the barn in the dark with only such a lamp. The Bible is talking, whenever it speaks of a lamp or a light, of a very small oil lamp or a candle.

Such a lamp gave light only for one or two steps at a time: it was not a modern floodlight covering the area. Thus, the meaning is that the Word of God is a light on our path, giving us guidance step by step, for our every move ahead. We move one step at a time, and our little problems as well as great are lighted by that lamp.

With a modern floodlight, we walk by sight. But life has no floodlights into the future to show us all its pitfalls and problems. We cannot walk by sight into the future. The Bible gives us necessary light for that kind of darkness, a step at a time, with the only possible word, God’s Word, which can light the future. Only Scripture can give us “the way of life” and correct our steps by its light on all our problems. If we give ourselves to it, then we can say with the Psalmist, “Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path” (Ps. 119:105).

## The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob

Over and over again in the Bible, God identifies Himself as “the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob” (Exod. 3:6, 15, etc.). This expression is so common that we fail to appreciate its meaning. It is especially striking against the background of pagan religions, in which the gods were identified in very pompous terms. If a man were mentioned in connection with the pagan gods, it was only a great king or conqueror. Of course, none of us are entirely free of name-dropping; if we can associate ourselves with great men, we do!

God, however, regularly identifies Himself with three wandering and nomadic ranchers. What God tells us by this is that, *first*, He is our God. He is not only concerned with Heaven, or the great powers of history, but with each of us specifically. When we face God, we do not do so as one of hundreds of millions of believers, or as a congregation, but as persons, as individuals. We have a more personal relationship with God than is possible with anyone else. Thus, we are never alone, and we have His promise, “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me” (Heb. 13:5–6).

*Second*, our Lord tells us that when God says, I am the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, He means that these men are alive and with Him (Matt. 22:32). The world may view these Hebrew patriarchs as dead, and our loved ones as dead, but they are alive and with the Lord. God reminds us that they are very much alive to Him and with Him by using this term to describe Himself: He is the God of Abraham, and your God and mine.

A very old hymn, the tune of which may go back to Old Testament times, begins, “The God of Abraham praise.” He who calls Himself the God of Abraham is indeed One to sing joyfully to, because, through Jesus Christ, He makes doubly clear that He is your God and mine also.

## The Law of Kindness

I had a telephone call from a former missionary who returned from Asia because of his wife's illness. He started a church in a small city and soon developed a Christian school, a sizable congregation, and a particularly beautiful complex of buildings in a lovely setting. He was resigning, taking a leave of absence to regain his health, and then start anew elsewhere. Native diseases had years earlier done harm to his wife. In his case, it was the pettiness and continual backbiting of members that was the problem.

Too many church people feel that God called them to set everybody straight on everything. I am continually shocked and amazed at how critical people are, especially of godly pastors! If the sin of men in the church is too often a casualness and an indifference, that of women is talking and gossiping. Paul, in Philippians 4:2, entreats two women in that congregation to be "of the same mind in the Lord." The relevance of these words remains.

Women need to remember that Scripture tells us that a central characteristic of a virtuous woman is this: "She openeth her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue is the law of kindness" (Prov. 31:26). To have our words governed by "the law of kindness" is a necessary virtue for men and women alike.

Notice what Scripture calls it: "the law," not advice or counsel. It is God's law for us, not an option. If Christians began to reorder their speech in the home, church, or the world at large with the law of kindness, things would be better for all of us. Try the law of kindness on your husband or wife sometime, and surprise them. Try it also on your pastor, if his heart can take the shock!

## Ingratitude

In Numbers 11:1, we read that the people “complained”; some translations read, they “murmured.” The word in everyday English would be rendered, they whined. We are told in Numbers 11:4 that they also wept. They felt sorry for themselves because all they had to eat was manna. God had delivered them from Egypt and slavery, but they longed for their slaves’ rations rather than God’s deliverance and provision. They were ungrateful.

The Psalms repeatedly summon us to be grateful and to give thanks unto the Lord, but too often we prefer to whine rather than thank God.

About fifty or more years ago, an old farmer in the Plains area told me about his grandparents. They had migrated from northern Europe and settled in a windswept and treeless plain. Their fuel was buffalo and cow chips, and their life was hard and meager. Daily, however, his grandfather thanked God for His blessings and for bringing him to America. I feel ashamed, the old farmer told me, when I recall how little he had and how grateful he was, and how much I have, and how I regularly forget to thank God for His blessings. He concluded, “I’m afraid we are becoming an ungrateful people.”

Surprise someone you love. Express your gratitude to them. Thank God also for His grace and mercy. It will surprise you how much better you will feel! We need one another, and we depend on one another. Supremely, of course, we depend on the Lord. Gratitude costs us nothing. Why are we so stingy with it?

## Thanksgiving

A few minutes ago, I had a welcome telephone call: a man thanking me, gratefully if tardily, for something I did for him some weeks ago. We hear too seldom from grateful people, and too often from complainers.

The psalmist says, “O give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good: for His mercy endureth forever” (Ps. 107:1). One of the most common themes of the psalms is the summons to give thanks to the Lord.

Thanksgiving should be specific: We should thank God for His gifts, individually and specifically. Each day gives us fresh reasons for gratitude; if we have no other reason, we should thank God for His grace.

Families without appreciation for what others do or for one another’s love soon become unhappy and unloving. The joy of preparing a good meal or working to support a family is made possible by appreciation. We are made happier when people express their gratitude to us; we should also be ready to give thanks to others.

Above all, we should give thanks to God. We need to cultivate thanksgiving in our lives, because God requires it.

An exhausted pastor, broken in health, had to retire a few years ago. At the time of his retirement, many people strongly urged him to stay on, saying they loved him and needed him. All this only hurt the man.

He told me, “If, over the years, they had been as ready to say as much to me instead of complaining about others, my health today might be better.” Have you hurt or broken down someone else’s spirit by your own lack of gratefulness?

## The Church

Few things make me more angry than church members who whine, “I’ve been a member two years, and the pastor has not called on me yet, nor have any of the members.” However, there are few things which I do not hear more often as I go from coast to coast.

My answer is simply this: If you are able-bodied and have no problems, why haven’t you called on the sick or elderly, or the shut-ins in the church? Did you join the church to serve the Lord, or to be served? The Bible requires the pastor to give himself to the ministry of the Word and to prayer (Acts 6:4). Do you have a higher word from God which gives you the right to command the pastor to hold your hand and cater to you?

The church is called to be the Lord’s army, not your private hospital room. Its calling is to prepare the Christian soldiers for action, and to enable them to put on the whole armor of God (Eph. 6:10–12), and to be strong in the Lord, not weak sisters who constantly need to have our hands patted.

One such complainer recently was a young man in his twenties, able-bodied and healthy; his pastor had spent a year in and out of surgery and was some Sundays barely able to stand in the pulpit because of pain. Several young couples also saw fit to forget his past services to do some present complaining.

These things make me angry. I do not believe that the Lord is any the less outraged. The Lord is the Lord: He is not ours to command and to use, neither is His body, the church. Don’t join the church to get in the way of Christ’s church, or to treat His pastors as your bowing and scraping servants. The church which pleases you will not please the Lord.

## The Vindication of Joseph

The story of Joseph is one of the most moving accounts in all of history. He went from the status of the favored son to that of a slave, to that of prime minister of all Egypt. In between, he was two years in prison for a crime he did not commit (Gen. 39:7–20, 41:1). There is no record that his false imprisonment conviction was ever reversed; Pharaoh was interested in what Joseph could do for Egypt, not in Joseph's past.

This is a familiar story. So many wrongs and evils done to us and to others go unrighted in history. Our Lord requires us to devote ourselves to His service, not to our vindication. In the end, He, as the great Judge of all men and nations, will right every wrong and close all books with justice.

This is a fact of faith we need to recognize. I know a very able and remarkably talented man who was deeply wronged and financially destroyed about fifteen years ago. The worst part of it all is that he has allowed it to destroy him; he goes over the matter hundreds of times with anyone near him, and he now has no friends. With his abilities, he could have in the past fifteen years easily rebuilt his fortune and gone further. Instead, he has chosen to brood on what happened. I understand his wife supports them now.

Our Lord tells us, "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof" (Matt. 6:34). In this fallen world, there are enough evils in the past, and more than enough in the future, to shatter any man's peace of mind. Instead of concerning ourselves with such things, we must do our duty to God and man, cope with today's evils, and trust in God's ultimate and unswerving justice.

The man I mentioned has had a super abundance of problems. But so too has a woman I know, poor, aging, and alone, yet she bubbles over with happiness, serenity, and good humor. The difference between the two is faith. Her griefs are far greater, and they continue, but in the face of them her faith grows. Of her it can truly be said, in Nehemiah's words, "[T]he joy of the LORD is your strength" (Neh. 8:10).

## Our Father

A very important aspect of Scripture is that our Lord teaches us to pray to God saying, “Our Father” (Matt. 6:9), not “my father.” Jesus Christ alone can speak of God as “my father.” We are God’s children *first*, by the adoption of His grace, and *second*, as members of the renewed covenant with Christ’s new humanity as our last Adam (1 Cor. 15:45-57).

This tells us that our salvation is personal but not individualistic. We are saved to become “members one of another” (Eph. 4:25). As members of the family of Christ, we are redeemed to serve Him and to help one another in His name.

To see ourselves as the goal of salvation is thus wrong; the goal is God’s community or Kingdom, and His righteousness or justice (Matt. 6:33). It is a personal salvation by our personal redeemer for His glorious purpose: a new humanity and a new creation.

If we are now a new creation in Christ, we have a purpose beyond ourselves; we live in terms of His Kingdom; we are governed by His law-word, and we are members of one another. Because the Lord has done marvelously for us, we strive to share His grace and our blessings one with another. We become actively missionary people at home and abroad.

Thus, when we pray “Our Father,” we are to remember that we are members of a great family on earth and in heaven. We have a responsibility one to another in Christ. A “selfish Christian” is about as accurate term as an “atheistic Christian”; it is nonsense. The redeemed of the Lord love and help the family of the Lord.

## The Sons of God

One of the most important definitions of a Christian is given by John 1:12–13, “But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.”

First of all, John compares our regeneration to Christ’s virgin birth: Christ owed His birth, not to human blood, nor to any physical urge, nor to a human plan or design, but to God. Our rebirth, like His birth, is a miracle.

Second, such a rebirth is into power, power to become the sons of God. Such a statement had only one meaning in John’s day: to be a son of God meant to be filled with power, with a power which is beyond man and this world.

Powerless Christianity is thus a contradiction in terms. To be a Christian is to be a man of power, a world-shaker and a world-mover. Of the early Christians, it was said that they turned the world upside down (Acts 17:6). All too many churchmen today can do no more than turn a teacup upside down!

The true believer is defined by power, power in the Word and the Spirit. We are called to power. Why settle for anything less? To turn our backs on this calling to power is to turn our backs on the Lord Himself.

We have a calling to exercise dominion and subdue the earth (Gen. 1:26–28). We dare not be indifferent to that calling. As the sons of Power, we have a world to conquer, and had better recognize our task and calling. It is the Lord who calls us, and it is He who empowers us.

## In Due Season

God's timing is not our timing, nor is our children's timing comparable to ours. We want things when we feel their need, and, like children we can't understand His delays.

In Hebrews 4:16, we are told, "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." "Time of need" in Greek is *eukairos*. It means a fitting time or opportunity. The same word, *eukairos*, also appears in the Greek version of the Psalms in the Septuagint, in Psalm 104:27, which tells us, "These wait all upon thee; that thou mayest give them their meat in due season." This makes the meaning very clear. The help God promises and gives is not in terms of when we want it but in terms of His determination of the "due season."

This does not sit well with us. We may be old and white haired, but in relation to the Lord, we are often like spoiled children. We want things when we ask for them. God's Word tells us, in due season.

Scripture tells us that God's gifts are very real to those "that wait upon the LORD" (Isa. 40:31, etc.). God assesses all our needs, and He determines the timing of all things. He is not our personal valet or maid to serve us when we demand it, but our Heavenly Father to give us what He determines we need, in due season.

Moreover, what Hebrews 4:16 tells us is that we are to go boldly to the throne of grace primarily for mercy and grace. We usually have a long shopping list when we pray, but how often are mercy and grace on that list, or high on that list?

## Thanksgiving

The origin of Thanksgiving is in the harvest festival of the Old Testament. The early American celebration was a self-conscious adoption of the Old Testament observance together with many other things. Throughout the year, the Hebrews constantly were summoned to thank God for His mercies and blessings. Many Psalms resound with thankful praise, especially Psalm 136: "O give thanks unto the LORD; for he is good: for his mercy endureth forever."

Today our tendency is to thank God only for His blessings. Our attitude too often is, no blessings, no thanks. In effect, we say, "What have you done for us lately, God?" In Scripture, the central aspect of thanksgiving is gratitude for God's mercy. Every verse of Psalm 136 concludes with the words "for his mercy endureth for ever"; twenty-six times this refrain is sounded.

"Mercy" was once a popular name for girls; the Puritans delighted in God's merciful nature and celebrated it. We speak little of God's mercy now. Apparently we feel that we deserve everything He gives and more.

But Scripture tells us that we are the objects of God's mercy in Jesus Christ. Mercy is so important that it is stressed in the Beatitudes: "Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy" (Matt. 5:7).

Psalm 85:10 tells us, "Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other." Mercy is linked to truth, righteousness (or, justice) and peace. Obviously, mercy is very important in our sight. We neglect it at our peril.

We all have our problems; certain things oppress and trouble us. We can all provide a catalogue of things wrong with our lives and the world. Thanksgiving is a time when we must forget these things to remember God's mercies.

## Faith

Last week, I was one of eight scholars from the United States and Britain who lectured at a Midwestern college. One of the Americans was an economist who has served under presidents from Franklin D. Roosevelt through Johnson, and has also been an ambassador. This learned professor, in the course of an amazing defense of federal interference and control over our lives, came out strongly for wage and price controls as greatly needed for our future welfare. We can give up certain freedoms, he felt, and be the better for it, because the federal government would then have the freedom to act for our interests. He summed up his position in these words: “We can eat our cake and have it too.”

It takes a great deal of faith to believe in that. When someone told me recently that it took “a lot of faith to believe the Bible,” more faith than he could muster, I remarked that, where politics were concerned, he had far more faith than the Bible called for!

To believe that our politicians are actually going to deliver on their promises requires a very great faith. In fact, our’s is a great age of faith, but not in Christ.

Dr. A., in asking us to believe that “We can eat our cake and have it too,” was asking for more faith in himself and in the federal government than I can ever muster. Since I believe that this is God’s world, I cannot believe that I can eat my cake and still have it intact and uneaten.

Dr. A. does not believe in Scripture nor in Christ. I do. Dr. A. is a man of great faith, although a very false faith. He believes that he and other intellectual bureaucrats can, through the federal government, perform amazing miracles. Many people agree with him.

Faith in itself is not enough. It must be in Christ. All men have faith in something, and usually the amount and intensity of their faith is staggering, as with Dr. A. If I have faith that the moon is made of green cheese, or that I can eat my cake and have it too, my faith is false and therefore dangerous. It is insane. I can then spend all my money and believe that I will still have it, or take poison and believe it will help me.

Our problem is not a lack of faith, but too much false faith. True faith is to believe in Jesus Christ; it is to believe that God is, “and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him” (Heb. 11:6). It means believing that God’s world is a law order, and that God does not bless the kind of muddled thinking Dr. A. represents. If our faith rests on any other foundation than the triune God and His redeeming power through Christ, it is false. What are your foundations?

## Black Power

It is depressing to hear American Negroes talk about “Black Power,” because it is such thinking that will ensure their enslavement. The curse of Africa through the centuries has been this “power” hunger. Where power is the goal of a people, the result is the development of a few tyrants, and a vast mass of slaves who long to be tyrants. This has been the life of Africa over the centuries.

Slaves were the money of Africa. Chiefs sold their tribal members to gain wealth and power, and people sold their family members for personal gain. Africa was easily conquered by Arabs first and then Europeans because the lust for power made African rulers vulnerable.

The inventive abilities of Africans were directed toward luxury and pleasure, carvings and ornaments which are important as art and wealth, but not for social progress. A remarkable invention was the African sedan chair. Carriers could transport a potentate over the roughest terrain and ensure him the smoothest possible ride. It was an invention which indicated very great engineering insight. Such insights, however, went to enhance power, not to further work and production. This is the key to Africa’s problems, and it rests on a moral and religious perspective, a worship of power. It has meant continuously a culture in which a few live well and powerfully, and many live as slaves.

This lust for power, unhappily, infests more than American Negroes. It is a part of our culture today. Every kind of group, Indians, labor groups, businessmen, and so on, organize as power blocs, trying to gain the upper hand and trying to gain any kind of advantage possible.

The key to progress is not a power drive but production. A power society is also a slave society, whereas a producing society creates prosperity and progress for all. Solomon observed, “In all labour there is profit: but the talk of the lips tendeth only to penury” (Prov. 14:23). “Wealth gotten by vanity shall be diminished: but he that gathereth by labour shall increase” (Prov. 13:11).

It takes productive work to ensure progress. The genius that went into the invention of the African sedan chair brought no good to Africa. It only meant that the African power lord could have, long ago, the best kind of modern cushioned and suspension engineering for a jungle trip over the roughest ground.

A power slogan is a slave slogan. That is, it wants to turn someone into a slave so that power can be exercised. A production slogan (the very idea sounds strange in our day) means that I work to produce so that both I and society have more food and products available for all. In the 1950s, sociologists were telling us (and rightly so) that the Bible brought about a “work ethic” in people, and they looked down on the Bible for that reason. Today we have Black Power, Student Power,

Gay Power, Women Power, Indian Power, and other such slogans in abundance, a variety of groups seeking power and really striving to create a slave society, whether they know it or not.

Solomon, in speaking of things on earth that “are exceedingly wise,” said, “The ants are a people not strong, yet they prepare their meat in the summer” (Prov. 30:25). Of course, you remember Solomon’s famous counsel of work, which began, “Go to the ant, thou sluggard” (Prov. 6:6–11). This was once a very popular text. But when was the last time you heard any preacher use that text with any group, old or young? Very rarely, and probably not for years, I would guess. Doesn’t that tell you something about our time, and about the church?

## Accept No Substitutes

A mother telephoned me in some desperation. She had heard me speak three years earlier, and now she wanted help. Her fifteen-year-old daughter was seriously delinquent, defiant in her attitude, and involved in promiscuity and narcotics. Was there a special school somewhere that could help her daughter be good?

I thought of that mother, and many others, as I read the Ann Landers column this morning. A twenty-two-year-old girl wrote of her “terrible problem.” Whenever she went out and had “a little too much to drink,” she wet her bed. Now she faced marriage soon and was terrified at the thought of her fiancé learning the truth. She wrote, “Can you suggest something that will help me stop wetting the bed permanently?” Ann Landers gave the obvious and sensible advice. Drinking obviously was not for her. So, “Stop drinking permanently.” Why did it not occur to the girl? Why did the mother of the fifteen-year-old delinquent fail to think of some discipline in the family?

The answer is an obvious one. People today expect a pill, or some kind of psychiatric treatment, or a medical gadget to solve all man’s problems. Give them the obvious answer, discipline, a change of habits, or self-control, and they are shocked and disappointed. They want things to be different automatically and mechanically. A doctor once told me that it continually amazed him what people expected some miracle drug might someday do for man. They expect a pill to replace the necessity for common sense and good health habits.

The root of all this is sin. Its principle is, change the world, but not me. Keep my daughter from her promiscuity and narcotics, but don’t ask me to do anything. Keep me from wetting my bed, but don’t ask me to stop drinking. Give me what I want without asking me to do anything I may not want to do.

Such a position is a halting between two opinions, and it marks much of our country. All too many people want the results of godliness and righteousness without the faith and obedience which it requires. They are very much like those whom Elijah spoke to. “And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? If the LORD be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word” (1 Kings 18:21). Not surprisingly, they became a slave people. The mother who telephoned continues to be a slave to her delinquent daughter.

The problems you and I face are more serious than the one faced by the bed-wetting girl, but we are just as ridiculous (and sinful) if we expect them to go away without doing something. No politician will cure our problems, nor will any miracle law replace the need for faith and

obedience. We had better act, or we will face worse troubles than a wet bed! Accept no substitutes for faith and character: they will not work.

## The Old Country Church

Much earlier in this century, Edwin Ford Piper wrote a moving poem about the old time country church of the earlier settlers of the West. The people came in wagons, “trailed by dust,” and the men “tie sweating teams to the much gnawed hitching post.” The church is simple and bare, and wild sunflowers alone surrounded the building. “The landscape wavers in the shimmering heat.”

Piper did not idealize the old church, nor its tired and drowsy people, nor the boys itching to get out and run awhile. It is “a little church; the settlers come for miles.” Half the trip for many is the pleasure of seeing other people, and visiting with them for awhile before and after the service. Piper concluded,

A little thing, this church? Remove its roots  
Ossa upon Pelion would not fill the pit.

In other words, mountain upon mountain would not fill the void left by the country church. Piper was right. The country church is largely gone; better buildings have taken its place, but their pulpits are too often occupied by men who do not believe the Scriptures they were ordained to preach. Federal and state appropriations, millions for educational projects, better farm houses, good farm equipment, these things and much more have made the countryside an easier place to live, and they have advanced farm productivity. But they have not been able to supply the faith and character which the old country church gave. Not all the mountains of appropriations and efforts can replace that which only the Word of God can give.

As the Psalmist said, “Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it” (Ps. 127:1). The old days had their problems, but there was then a faith sufficient for coping with those problems. No one in their right mind wants a return to the past, but neither can man without faith have much of a future. The faith which makes a people strong today and assures it a good future is now lacking.

I can recall the time when few farmers locked their houses; thieves were a rarity. Not too many years ago, the same was true in many California towns and cities: homes were commonly left unlocked, and were safe. Now the number of thefts in farm areas is increasing, and, in many cities, people get “sitters” to stay in their houses even if they are away only for a day or an evening. “[E]xcept the LORD keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain” (Ps. 127:1). The truest safety of a people, and its best watchman or police, is a people obedient to God and His Word.

“The Church” was the title of Piper’s poem. The Lord said of His church (not our piles of lumber and stone), that “the gates of hell shall not prevail against it” (Matt. 16:18). The Berkeley Version rightly translates “prevail” as “hold out.” Now, an evil world is breaking in and robbing us. Where Christ’s church stands, the world cannot “hold out” or “prevail” against that power: the true church will break in and overcome the world. Which is your church, Christ’s or man’s?

## The Good Neighbor

A conscientious young man, working for a printer, noticed that some copy brought in for printing contained an error. He spotted the error well in time for a correction, but the printer refused to take the five minutes necessary to change the plate. "It's his error," he said, "and it's not our job to correct his copy." Technically, the printer was right; morally, he was wrong. Very often the best test of our character begins where our normal responsibility ends.

The parable of the Good Samaritan tells us much about this. The man from Jerusalem who went down to Jericho "fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead" (Luke 10:30). It would be easy to find fault with this traveler. He journeyed over some countryside which made for good hiding places for thieves; a man with any money or goods should not have traveled it alone.

The priest and the Levite had "good reason" to leave him alone. It was none of their business, "not their job," to look after careless or unfortunate travelers. They were good men who did their duty, like the printer, where they were supposed to do it, and no further.

The Samaritan, however, had compassion on the poor victim. As a Samaritan, he had no use for Jews, nor any desire to integrate with them. Neither Samaritans nor Jews cared to associate with one another. This, however, was not a question of friendship but of godly compassion. He at once took care of the man, giving him first aid, and then took him to an inn and paid for his care until the victim recovered. Perhaps, after his recovery these two men, Samaritan and Jew, never saw each other again. This was not the point. The true neighbor, Jesus said, was the man who showed mercy and compassion in a time of need; he was the man who did more than his normal duty. It was personal help, and it was an act by the Samaritan above and beyond his normal responsibility.

We have an age today which pours money into impersonal and institutional charities but has little thought for the needs of a neighbor, nor the personal help of a stranger. We are ready to give to the collector for charities who knocks at our door, and through a church envelope. It is very antiseptic and impersonal that way. Once we give, we feel "it's not our job" to get involved with people. Neighbors, relatives, and fellow Christians can go through one grief and distress after another, but, like the printer, the priest, and the Levite, we are good Pharisees: we have given at the office or at church, and our responsibility is ended.

The good neighbor, the lawyer admitted, was "He that shewed mercy on him" (Luke 10:37), and Jesus said, "Go, and do thou likewise." Until we do, can we expect God to have mercy on us?

## Is Equality Possible?

Today a vast amount of money and legislation is dedicated to making equality a reality by law. The only conclusion of such a course of action is bankruptcy, both moral and financial bankruptcy, because the very idea of law is against equality.

Any and every law immediately discriminates and guarantees inequality, because it declares certain acts, and the people who commit those acts, criminal; this is discrimination, and it is inequality. The criminal is by law made unequal to the law-abiding citizenry. But supposing these laws are changed radically: what then? You still have inequality and discrimination, only now you discriminate against the law-abiding and hardworking. Any and every law discriminates; it establishes a difference and an inequality before the law with respect to men in terms of good and evil. The only question for any society is this: whom shall we discriminate against? Shall we discriminate in favor of socialists and communists and against property owners?

Discrimination and inequality cannot be abolished by law: they are the realities of a moral world. But can discrimination and equality be abolished, as some anarchists hold, by abolishing all civil law? On the contrary, a new inequality will be established: in a lawless world, brute force will discriminate against the weak and defenseless, and force its will upon others.

Equality is a high-sounding and impossible dream. A little thinking makes it clear to anyone that it is impossible.

Then why is it promoted? It is an easy way to garner the votes of simpleminded fools and envious men, and those who promote equality are really interested in gaining power. All our equal rights legislation has only hurt the people as a whole and added more powers to a growing monster government.

And the same trend will continue, as long as there are enough fools to believe in equality. And fools are dangerous to society. As Solomon said, "Let a bear robbed of her whelps meet a man, rather than a fool in his folly" (Prov. 17:12), and "a companion of fools shall be destroyed" (Prov. 13:20). The only remedy? "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; but fools despise wisdom and instruction" (Prov. 1:7).

## Prejudice

The Bible has a great deal to say about unfair prejudice, and prejudice in general, but men are not too ready to hear it. *First* of all, there is nothing wrong with prejudice in itself: prejudice can be good or bad. The word *prejudice* comes from “prejudge,” to judge in advance. If in advance of meeting a man known to be a pervert you prejudge him because you, as a Christian, feel that all such men are evil, you are prejudiced, but it is a sensible prejudice, a godly one. If you are prejudiced against all rotten eggs and feel that it is unnecessary to keep an open mind about them and to sample one before deciding about it, then your prejudice is a sensible and wise one. Without prejudice, a man would be a fool; he would be sampling every rotten egg because he wants to boast of an open mind. The result would be a bad stomach and poorer sense.

Unfair prejudice is directed against something other than the character of the man or of the egg. If we say all brown eggs or all white eggs are bad, we are being silly and unfairly, unreasonably prejudiced.

Some of the unfair prejudices condemned by the Bible are cited by Moses in Exodus 23:2–3, 6 (Berkeley Version): “Do not follow the crowd in wrongdoing, nor, when witnessing in a lawsuit, lean toward the majority to thwart justice; neither be partial to the poor man in his lawsuit ... Do not twist the rights of your poor in his lawsuit.”

Several things are condemned here: *First*, prejudice in favor of a majority, following the crowd. Truth is not in numbers; most people can be wrong and usually have been. We must stand, not in terms of the crowd, but in terms of the Lord. *Second*, we are forbidden to be partial to the poor simply because they are poor. This is a common prejudice in our day and one which leads to considerable sin. We are surrounded by bleeding hearts who are sure always that the poor welfare recipients are in the right, or the grape pickers on strike, or the workingman. In every case, they are prejudiced in favor of the poor, whatever the justice of the case may be. *Third*, prejudice against the poor and in favor of the rich is forbidden. There are always men who side with the fattest pocketbook and the best paycheck. They vote in favor of success, not truth. This too is an unfair and sinful prejudice.

We need prejudices, judgments, in favor of righteous judgment. As our Lord declared, “Judge not according to appearance, but judge righteous judgment” (John 7:24). Long ago, Joshua summoned his people to make such a stand: “[C]hoose you this day whom ye will serve ... but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD” (Josh. 24:15).

## Foolishness in the Heart

Basic to modern education is the idea that the child is naturally good, and that all the child needs is encouragement in order to develop its capabilities. The school should therefore be, early pioneers of progressive education said, child-centered, not subject-centered.

But the Bible denies that the doctrine of natural goodness of a child is true. Man is born a sinner. "Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him" (Prov. 22:15). To grow character in a child, some pruning or cutting is necessary (Prov. 15:32-33). "[A] child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame" (Prov. 29:15).

The results of modern education are all around us. Too many young men and young women refuse to grow up; maturity is some kind of evil to them. The popular college war cry is, "Never trust anyone over thirty." Why? The reason is that people over thirty have usually settled down to a world of work and discipline, to responsibilities and to family life.

Hardworking, disciplined adults, who are anything but childish, are the image of everything evil to those who have been taught that the child is naturally good. If childhood is the great good, then naturally maturity is the great evil. The logical thing is to declare war on parents.

And warfare is exactly what we are getting. Moreover, it is total war against the entire world of Christian faith, patriotism, the family, law and order, and everything else which godly parents seek to pass on to their children. The battle cry of this total war is "Everything goes!" In France, during the 1968 student revolution, one student wrote on an auditorium wall over a "No Smoking" sign, "It is forbidden to forbid." Why? Because his new religion of childishness holds that "Everything is permitted."

All this vividly demonstrates the truth of Scripture: foolishness is bound up in the heart of the child, and the rod of discipline is necessary to drive it far from him. That foolishness is bad enough in a baby; it is a menace in grown youth and men who riot in schools and cities, burn buildings, and assault citizens and police. It is high time to apply the rod of discipline.

## Weathermen

Of all the people in this world that I like, among those I like the least are television weathermen. This past fall, winter, and spring, I traveled, as usual, back and forth across the country. Many areas were experiencing a drought. In some parts of the East, restaurants would not give me a glass of water unless I asked for it. However, each day in my hotel room, as I listened to the late night or early morning news, some idiot weatherman purred about the beautiful days, the warm weather, and bright sunshine.

In North Dakota, I was told that there would be no wheat this year unless torrential rains came soon. The weathermen said, "More beautiful weather tomorrow."

I came home to get the same nonsense each time from San Francisco and Sacramento television weathermen. Don't these city yokels know that rain and snow are needed to grow food? The state schools teach sex education. How about a little weather education?

I doubt, though, that more schooling would help; from being ignorant fools, they would be simply learned fools. Solomon tells us, "Let a bear robbed of her whelps meet a man, rather than a fool in his folly" (Prov. 17:12). In other words, it is safer to tangle with an angry she-bear than a fool.

Fools are too pleased with their folly to learn anything. They know better than God what is right and wrong, and, if they had a chance, they would lecture God Himself on how to think. The fool has one standard of judgment, himself. The world is good, the weather is good, or life is good, if it pleases him, and not otherwise.

This is why Solomon says that it is far better to be a poor man with integrity than a fool with a perverse mouth (Prov. 19:1).

This past winter, we have seen a shortage of rainfall in many areas, but no shortage of fools.

## The Trouble with Thieves

This morning I stopped at the office of an “underground” leftist newspaper to pick up a back issue I needed for my work and writing. Inside the lobby, two long-haired revolutionaries, both staff members, were busy with a problem. Their coin-operated newspaper racks were regularly being robbed of all their papers.

One of the two young men pointed out how easy it was to loosen the sheet metal screws and take out all the papers. They would have to be replaced with something more secure, he said, to prevent more theft.

I was amused as I listened because their paper is vitriolic in its attacks on and contempt for Biblical faith and morality. They openly express contempt for God’s law, for property rights, for sexual morality, for everything the Bible teaches. But now their property was being robbed, and they were upset.

I was reminded of the boy I went to high school with who thought it was great fun to steal melons, and said that the best tasting melons were stolen ones. A few years ago, back home, a friend told me that this same person, now a farmer, was busy damning the young punks who were stealing his melons!

The Communists, both before and in the early years after the Russian Revolution, were busy destroying morality and religion. Now they have a problem in that a generation reared by their standards will not work, will steal anything they can get away with, and has no real standards except self-interest. The Communists are now trying to tell their youth that laziness, theft, and promiscuity are bourgeois, capitalistic sins! It has not improved their situation, however.

No society can exist without moral law, and no man-made moral law has ever commanded man’s obedience. Men who work to overthrow moral order are in the end very unhappy when they themselves are robbed by lawless men.

We have been trying to operate without God and His law. Our schools have reared a generation of lawless youth, and our apostate churches have given men dry sawdust instead of the Word of God. The results should surprise no one.

God promises another result if we turn to Him: “If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land” (2 Chron. 7:14).

We mentioned earlier the two hippies who were upset because their newspapers were being stolen. They had no right to be, since they were working to create a lawless, godless world. The

next time you complain about the world's dishonesty, look at yourself first. Are you like those young men, a hypocrite? Have you any right to complain about bad character, if you are one?

Is it not instead time for repentance and the words of righteousness? Is it not time for politicians, preachers, teachers, and parents to say, when faced with young criminals and hoodlums, that the trouble with these thieves is that they take after us, who have been called to take after Christ?

## Immoral Indignation

Rarely in history have more people been more concerned about moral reform than today. Whenever I go to speak or lecture, I find the great interest of people is moral reform.

Students are indignant about the immorality of the Watergate affair, or some local scandal. Adults have their lists of moral indignation. Everywhere almost everyone is seething with some form of moral indignation.

However, it is all highly immoral. I refuse to get upset about Watergate, or some county supervisor's dishonesty, because I know that such things are simply mild reflections of what is in every man's heart in some degree, and in most men's hearts to a major degree. In other words, I am cynical, and with good reason.

When someone who believes in the "new morality" for himself, and regards Biblical doctrines concerning life, marriage, and property as obsolete and ridiculous, gets angry because a politician is guilty of an underhanded or dishonest act, I have a right to call his attitude immoral indignation.

One man whom I met a few years ago talked angrily about the politicians' graft, and all the women they supposedly are all playing around with. Before the evening was over, I knew what this man's problem was. He wanted the same for himself and was angry that he could not get as much as others. In fact, a friend of mine was swindled out of a few thousand dollars by this angry man.

Our Lord had a word for such immoral indignation: hypocrisy. "Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye" (Matt. 7:5). The hypocrite is always full of immoral indignation about every other man's sin, but he coddles his own. The hypocrite wants the whole world to be morally reformed, so that the world can be made safe for his own sin.

The hypocrite wants to pass a law making the answer to sin a political one, rather than a religious one, because the last thing he wants is a confrontation with God. The hypocrite is good at investigating the sins of others, and he enjoys every Watergate affair, because it gives him an opportunity to pretend to moral indignation, but he will never look at his own sin. In fact, he is an expert at being what our Lord called a "whited sepulcher."

Because of their radical dishonesty, hypocrites are dangerous people. Watch out for them. Above all else, make sure that you never meet one in your mirror. He will be the most dangerous one to you.

## On Racism

A young black pastor spoke to a major church gathering recently on the “evils of racism.” He was very favorably received, and resolutions were passed demanding that Christians work to overcome this great evil. Ministers present found the young man and his pleas for the acceptance of his people very moving, and, indeed, I myself found the printed text of his speech a very able and compelling document.

Unfortunately, I kept hearing the young man’s remarks to me when we met in the East a few years ago. He is an able, intelligent, moral, and earnest young man, now a pastor in the black section of a major Eastern city. He described vividly and frankly the narcotic addiction, the moral degradation, the lack of sound family life, and the lack of any appreciable Christian faith in this community. He went so far as to say, perhaps in a moment of pessimism and bitterness, that it would be difficult for him to find a girl who would be a suitable wife for him, both morally and religiously, as well as intellectually.

This young black pastor is a superior man; it is moving to see his dedication to his people and his intense concern for them. He puts many pastors, black and white, to shame with his evangelical zeal.

But he is still wrong in assuming that the white man is to blame for the sins of his people. If we grant him all his claims of prejudice and oppression, we still cannot remove the fact of moral responsibility. By his own statement, the people of his community are at the very least indifferent to godly morality and doctrine, and they hold godliness in contempt.

William Braden, in *The Age of Aquarius* (p. 208), cites the “pathetic example” of a black protestor on television one night who shouted, “We black people need self-respect. We demand self-respect!” Self-respect is not something we can force from other people; it is an inner gain that no outer circumstance can strip us of. Such people are asking for self-respect in the wrong places. Reformation, like charity, begins at home.

We do have racists, black and white. The greater problem, however, is the religious and moral failure of people, black and white. This failure closes the doors of heaven on men’s faces. Not surprisingly, it bars some doors on earth also.

The answer is not to flail at racism and prejudice, but, by the proclamation of the gospel, to redeem men and women from their degenerate ways and to establish them in the new humanity of Jesus Christ. This young pastor has many doors open to him, more, in fact, than most of us, and he has manifested the faith and character which overcomes obstacles. By falsifying the real issue, however, he will not help his people. In the long run, he may close the door of hope, Jesus Christ,

if he pursues his present course.

## Snobs

On March 11, 1971, the *Wall Street Journal* reported the developments in the mink market. An abundance of mink, plus a recession and tight money, tumbled mink prices to their lowest level in forty years. As a result, the *Journal* reported, whereas five years previously the cheapest mink stole cost \$600, in March of 1971 the price tumbled as low as \$133. Many wives of workingmen were busy buying up cheap minks. The *Journal* observed that “[t]he sight of all those ladies ... out in their minks has caused higher-income status seekers to search out mink that doesn’t look like mink.”

The situation is briefly this. The wives of workingmen wanted to look like those above them, and better than those around them, and the wealthier women were unhappy because women of limited means could now wear mink also. Basic to all concerned was snobbery.

A snob makes birth, wealth, or appearance the standard of worth. A snob is overbearing and contemptuous to all inferiors and very eager to cater to and fawn over superiors.

What makes a snob? All men are concerned with the impression they make, and they react to the opinions of others. If men are godly, they will, with all their heart, mind, and being, try at all times to conform themselves to the Word of God and to Christ’s calling. This often means displeasing men or breaking with conventions and tastes that are immoral or ungodly. This does not mean that the Christian tries to be offensive or that he enjoys disagreeing with people. It means simply that God being his Lord, he conforms himself to the Word of God and to Jesus Christ, his redeemer. It is thus his purpose to please God.

If men will not have God to be their Lord, they will allow men’s opinions and standards to govern them, because no man can live unto himself, and we are very much a part of what or whom we love. Snobbery in some form is inescapable in a world without faith.

“Would you believe it,” a mother said of her daughter, “my daughter is a snob.” Ten years before, as a young girl, she had gone into tantrums if she had to wear the same dress to school too often. Now she goes into similar tantrums if she is asked to wash and comb her stringy hair and wear decent clothing. Then the tastes of a snob required new dresses. Now it requires outdoing others in dirty, casual attire. The clothes had changed but not her snobbish heart. Appearance was still everything to the girl, and she still despised those who did not conform to the new snobbery.

To the extent that we are not governed by the Word of God, we will be governed by the word of man, and we will be snobs. If we are not concerned with pleasing God, we will be concerned with pleasing men.

Examine your heart, therefore. Who governs it, God or man? Whose opinion do you value most? Be honest with yourself, because in the day of judgment, God will be totally honest with you.

## Foundations

A minister made a statement, carefully backed by specific evidence, with full documentation. Another minister placed a telephone call to the agency charged with delinquency, and an anonymous person came to the phone and denied the published and documented charges. This agency, by no means Christian, has refused to answer the documented charges. The second minister still chose to believe the anonymous person on the phone against a fellow pastor and a documented charge by a very responsible authority.

Strange? Not at all. As Solomon says of man, “[A]s he thinketh in his heart, so is he” (Prov. 23:7). Men decide things all too often, not in terms of the evidence, but in terms of their character. Their judgments say more about themselves than about the truth.

A juryman told me of an acquittal of an obviously guilty young man. One of the men who voted for acquittal was someone he knew. He confronted him later, saying, “You knew he was guilty, didn’t you?” The man’s answer was revealing: “Yes, but it could be my son next time.” He valued his son more than the truth; it is no wonder that his son is a problem and may face a jury someday.

We dare not make decisions and judgments in terms of ourselves and our interests. To do so is to enthrone injustice and to become partners to iniquity. The warning of the Psalmist is to the point: “Shall the throne of iniquity have fellowship with thee, which frameth mischief by a law?” (Ps. 94:20).

Today it is man’s evil and mischief which frames our judgments and laws rather than the Word of God.

Your comments and judgments will reveal your foundations. What are they?

## Hearing and Speaking

Our Lord declares, “He that is of God heareth God’s words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God” (John 8:47). In other words, our hearing depends upon our faith; our lack of faith will make it impossible for us to hear what God says. Because God’s Word is an indictment of fallen man, man rejects it and closes his mind to it. What we are determines how we hear, and also how we speak. In 1364, Petrarch wrote of the visit of a philosopher who came to him in his library. Petrarch said of him, “He was one of those who think they live in vain unless they are constantly snarling at Christ or his divine teachings.” In the midst of a Christian civilization, this philosopher would only listen to the followers of Averroes, not of Christ.

What we say reveals our heart. It tells others what is important in our lives, and also what we listen to.

Our world is bigger than the daily news, or the daily gossip. It is God’s world, and it accomplishes His purpose. The old saying is true: “Man proposes, God disposes.” If we listen only to men, our hearts and lives will be soured, because the turmoil, pride, and sin of men’s hearts will be expressed daily.

To hear the Lord is to hear the word of grace, peace, and victory, and it enables us to speak the word of grace to others. We are conduits and channels, and what passes through us can have a wide influence, or a narrow one, for good or for evil.

Our Lord says, “[E]very idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment” (Matt. 12:36). The word translated as “idle” means worthless, anti-work, a word that does not good. Speaking and hearing are religious matters!

## Troubles and God

Back in 1953, I read something written by Thomas Wilson, a Church of England bishop, about 300 years ago. He wrote, “I know, O Lord, that it is good for me to be in trouble, or Thou wouldest not suffer it to be so.” I did not like what I read, but I knew it was true. When the Lord sends us troubles, He wants us to learn something. The Lord sends us into the world to do His will, not ours. He alone knows what is best for us, and very often we no more like what is good for us than we liked, as children, our parents’ decisions for us.

We are plainly told that “whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth” (Heb. 12:6). When God adopts us into His family, He begins a chastening process. He brings us into conformity to His will by the things we suffer. “Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby” (Heb. 12:11).

God prepares us for life in time and eternity. We tend to think in terms of today, and so we find His dealings with us difficult and trying. He tells us, however, that His chastenings are evidence of His love.

The lack of chastenings in families, schools, churches, and elsewhere is thus a witness to the decline of true love and to the rise of lawlessness and unstable, undisciplined peoples.

The hand of God is on all of us. Look for it, and trust Him in all His dealings with you.

## The Author

Rousas John Rushdoony (1916-2001) was a well-known American scholar, writer, and author of over thirty books. He held B.A. and M.A. degrees from the University of California and received his theological training at the Pacific School of Religion. An ordained minister, he worked as a missionary among Paiute and Shoshone Indians as well as a pastor to two California churches. He founded the Chalcedon Foundation, an educational organization devoted to research, publishing, and cogent communication of a distinctively Christian scholarship to the world at large. His writing in the Chalcedon Report and his numerous books spawned a generation of believers active in reconstructing the world to the glory of Jesus Christ. Until his death, he resided in Vallecito, California, where he engaged in research, lecturing, and assisting others in developing programs to put the Christian Faith into action.

## The Ministry of Chalcedon

CHALCEDON (kal-SEE-don) is a Christian educational organization devoted exclusively to research, publishing, and cogent communication of a distinctively Christian scholarship to the world at large. It makes available a variety of services and programs, all geared to the needs of interested ministers, scholars, and laymen who understand the propositions that Jesus Christ speaks to the mind as well as the heart, and that His claims extend beyond the narrow confines of the various institutional churches. We exist in order to support the efforts of all orthodox denominations and churches. Chalcedon derives its name from the great ecclesiastical Council of Chalcedon (AD 451), which produced the crucial Christological definition: “Therefore, following the holy Fathers, we all with one accord teach men to acknowledge one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, at once complete in Godhead and complete in manhood, truly God and truly man....” This formula directly challenges every false claim of divinity by any human institution: state, church, cult, school, or human assembly. Christ alone is both God and man, the unique link between heaven and earth. All human power is therefore derivative: Christ alone can announce that, “All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth” (Matthew 28:18). Historically, the Chalcedonian creed is therefore the foundation of Western liberty, for it sets limits on all authoritarian human institutions by acknowledging the validity of the claims of the One who is the source of true human freedom (Galatians 5:1). The Chalcedon Foundation publishes books under its own name and that of Ross House Books. It produces a magazine, Faith for All of Life, and a newsletter, The Chalcedon Report, both bimonthly. All gifts to Chalcedon are tax deductible. For complimentary trial subscriptions, or information on other book titles, please contact:

Chalcedon • Box 158 • Vallecito, CA 95251 USA

[www.chalcedon.edu](http://www.chalcedon.edu)