

SECTION 36

Filing and Saving Your Work

Filing and Saving Your Work

“The best teachers in any field of knowledge are those who remind students all their lives. It is particularly true of the ministry of the Word.”

(John R. W. Stott)

“Plan your preparation time weeks ahead, and keep to your timetable. Show your people you love them by the time you spend in prayer and preparation.”

(Peter Adam, *Speaking God's Words*, 167)

I. Filing

1. Purchase a standard four-door filing cabinet to begin. Add new cabinets as needed.
2. Develop both biblical and topical categories.
 - a. Start your topical files from “Abortion” to “Zwingli” and add new topic files as needed.
 - b. Start your biblical files with one on each book of the Bible. Eventually, you will want to expand this to one per chapter of the Bible. Later, you will want to break some chapters down to smaller separate segments (e.g., Eph. 1:1-14; Eph. 1:15-23).

II. Tapes

1. Purchase a dependable and, as inexpensive as possible, tape storage system (a “sound stacker”). Recognize CD's are on the way.
2. Develop a biblical, topical and author index system.
 - a. Notebook for topics/authors
 - b. Wide margin Bible for sermon text
 - c. Tape and catalog your messages

III. Your Sermons

1. Conserve all your research work. Add to, but never reinvent the wheel.
2. Save your sermon notes. That makes it easy to recall them. Document well!
3. A notebook binder system is a proven method, as it individualizes sermon files.
4. Don't just read a book or listen to a tape, own it through proper conservation principles (Mark and record your observations/highlights).

Sermons by Dr. James Merritt

Matthew 5:10:12

“PERSEVERING IN PERSECUTION”

INTRODUCTION

1. WHEN YOU THINK THESE VERSES OVER VERY CAREFULLY THEY WILL CAUSE YOU, AT FIRST, A GREAT DEAL OF TROUBLE. FOR FIRST OF ALL, THEY ARE PARADOXICAL. JESUS SAYS, “CONGRATULATIONS, IF YOU’RE BEING PERSECUTED”. NOW THAT’S A TWIST. USUALLY IT’S BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO CAN DODGE THE BULLET, NOT BITE THE BULLET.

2. HAVE YOU BEEN REVEILED, KICKED AROUND, SLANDERED, MOCKED, SCORNED, CRITICIZED, GOSSIPED ABOUT? JESUS SAYS, “CONGRATULATIONS”: NOW THAT’S A VERY PARADOXICAL STATEMENT TO SAY THE LEAST. YOU OUGHT TO BE GLORIOUSLY HAPPY WHEN PEOPLE PERSECUTE YOU AND GOSSIP ABOUT YOU AND SAY ALL KINDS OF EVIL AND FALSE THINGS ABOUT YOU.

3. THESE ARE ALSO VERY PECULIAR VERSES. HOW MANY OF YOU HAVE BEEN PERSECUTED TODAY? HAS ANYONE JUST GOTTEN OUT OF JAIL FOR PREACHING THE GOSPEL? ANYONE HERE NEED SOME OINTMENT FOR YOUR BACK WHERE YOU’VE BEEN BEATEN FOR THE GOSPEL OF JESUS.

4. WE RARELY THINK TODAY, AT LEAST IN THIS COUNTRY, OF PERSECUTION. AS A MATTER OF FACT, WE THINK IT IS A VICTORY IF WE COME TO CHURCH WHEN IT’S RAINING. HOW MANY TIMES WILL A PREACHER SAY ON A RAINY SUNDAY, “I WANT TO THANK ALL OF YOU BRAVE PEOPLE WHO CAME IN THE RAIN-TO CHURCH”. NO, WE DON’T REALLY KNOW VERY MUCH ABOUT PERSECUTION TODAY, AND IT IS NOT BECAUSE WE LIVE IN A DIFFERENT AGE. IT IS BECAUSE WE ARE LIVING, I’M AFRAID, A DIFFERENT KIND OF CHRISTIANITY.

I. THE REALITY OF PERSECUTION

1. NOTICE THAT JESUS SAYS, WE ARE TO BE BLESSED AND HAPPY WHEN WE ARE PERSECUTED, NOT IF WE ARE PERSECUTED. IT’S INTERESTING TO NOTICE THAT BELIEVING AND SUFFERING ARE SIAMESE TWINS IN THE WORD OF GOD. “FOR TO YOU IT HAS BEEN GRANTED FOR CHRIST’S SAKE, NOT ONLY TO BELIEVE IN HIM, BUT ALSO TO SUFFER FOR HIS SAKE”. (PHIL. 1:29)

2. DO YOU LIKE THE PROMISES IN THE BIBLE? DO YOU LIKE TO GET A WORD FROM GOD THAT YOU CAN APPLY TO YOUR OWN LIFE? WELL, IF YOU LIKE GOD’S PROMISES, LISTEN TO THIS PROMISE IN II TIMOTHY 3:12. “AND INDEED, ALL WHO DESIRE TO LIVE GODLY IN CHRIST JESUS WILL BE PERSECUTED”. LIKE ONE PREACHER SAID, “GOD NEVER PROMISED SMOOTH SAILING, HE JUST PROMISED A SAFE LANDING.”

3. DO YOU WANT TO BE IN THE CENTER OF GOD’S WILL? DO YOU WANT TO SAY TO GOD WITH YOUR LIFE, GOD I WANT YOUR WILL TO BE DONE IN MY LIFE. WELL, IF YOU DO, YOU REMEMBER I PETER 4:19, “THEREFORE, LET THOSE WHO SUFFER ACCORDING TO THE WILL OF GOD, ENTRUST THEIR SOULS TO A FAITHFUL CREATURE IN DOING WHAT IS RIGHT”.

4. THE BIBLE PROMISES OVER AND OVER THAT IT IS THE WILL OF GOD THAT WE SUFFER. THAT IF WE LIVE GODLY, WE’RE GOING TO SUFFER. THAT GOD HAS GRANTED US THE PRIVILEGE OF SUFFERING FOR JESUS.

5. NOW YOU SAY, WELL I’VE NEVER BEEN REVEILED FOR MY FAITH. I’VE NEVER BEEN PERSECUTED. NO ONE HAS EVER SLANDERED ME BECAUSE OF MY STAND FOR JESUS. WELL FRIEND, DOES THAT SAY SOMETHING ABOUT GOD, OR DOES IT SAY SOMETHING ABOUT YOU. YOU KNOW, SOME PEOPLE THINK GOD LOVES US MORE THAN THE EARLY CHRISTIANS, SO HE KEEPS US FROM PERSECUTIONS. I THINK THE REASON WHY WE ARE NOT PERSECUTED LIKE THE EARLY CHRISTIANS WAS, IS NOT BECAUSE GOD LOVES US MORE, BUT BECAUSE WE LOVE GOD LESS.

6. I HEARD ABOUT A MAN WHO LIVED AN EASY, ROSE-BED KIND OF A CHRISTIAN LIFE, WHO WENT TO HEAVEN. HE FOUND HIMSELF WALKING BETWEEN TWO SAINTS, AND HE ASKED ONE, “HOW DID YOU GET HERE”? THE MAN SAID, “OH, I WAS BURNED AT THE STAKE AS A MISSIONARY IN AFRICA”. THE FELLOW SAID, “MAN, THAT’S AWFUL”. THE MISSIONARY SAID, “NO, NOT REALLY, IT WAS AN HONOR TO SUFFER FOR JESUS, BECAUSE AFTER ALL HE DIED FOR ME”. HE TURNED TO THE OTHER SAINT AND SAID, “WELL, HOW DID YOU GET HERE”? THE SAINT SAID, “OH, I WAS IN A COMMUNIST PRISON CAMP, AND THEY TORTURED ME TO DEATH. SEE THE SCARS ON MY HEAD AND MY BODY WHERE I WAS BEATEN”. THE FELLOW SAID, “OH, THAT’S TERRIBLE”. THE SAINT SAID, “NOT REALLY, I REJOICE BECAUSE I HAVE THE PRIVILEGE AND HONOR OF SUFFERING FOR JESUS. AFTER ALL, HE DIED FOR ME”. THEN THEY TURNED TO THIS

FELLOW IN THE MIDDLE AND SAID, “SAY, HOW DID YOU SUFFER FOR JESUS”?

7. YOU KNOW, MOST OF US ARE AFRAID OF EVEN GETTING A DOOR SLAMMED IN OUR FACE. LET ME TELL YOU A FOOL-PROOF WAY TO AVOID GETTING A DOOR SLAMMED IN YOUR FACE. DON'T KNOCK ON DOORS. YOU SEE, THAT'S WHAT WE DO TODAY. TO AVOID PERSECUTION, WE JUST AVOID LIVING FOR JESUS. BUT JESUS SAYS, “IN EVERY LIFE SOME RAIN MUST FALL”, AND WHEN YOU LIVE FOR THE LORD JESUS, YOU WILL GO THROUGH THE STORM.

II. THE REASONS FOR PERSECUTION

1. LET ME SAY THERE IS A DIFFERENCE BETWEEN PUNISHMENT AND PERSECUTION. NOTICE IN VERSE 11, THE WORD, FALSELY. JESUS HERE IS DEALING NOT WITH PUNISHMENT, BUT WITH PERSECUTION.

2. YOU SEE, SOMETIMES WHAT WE CALL PERSECUTION IS REALLY JUST PUNISHMENT. IF YOU RUDELy TRY TO SHARE YOUR FAITH BY SHOVING IT DOWN SOMEONE'S THROAT AND THEY TELL YOU TO HIT THE ROAD, THAT'S NOT PERSECUTION, THAT'S PUNISHMENT.

3. REMEMBER THE WORDS OF PETER IN I PETER 4:14-16, “IF YOU ARE-REVILED FOR THE NAME OF CHRIST YOU ARE BLEST, BECAUSE THE SPIRIT OF GLORY AND OF GOD REST UPON YOU. BY NO MEANS LET ANY OF YOU SUFFER AS A MURDERER OR THIEF OR EVIL DOER, OR A TROUBLESOME MEDDLER. BUT IF ANYONE SUFFERS AS A CHRISTIAN LET HIM NOT FEEL ASHAMED, BUT IN THAT NAME LET HIM GLORIFY GOD”. REMEMBER WE ARE DEALING WITH PERSECUTION, NOT WITH PUNISHMENT, AND JESUS SAID THERE ARE SEVERAL REASONS FOR PERSECUTION.

A. RIGHTEOUSNESS - VERSE 10

1. THE ROOT MEANING OF THE WORD RIGHTEOUSNESS IS “TO DIVIDE OR TO BE DIFFERENT”. THAT IS BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO PERSECUTE YOU WHEN YOU ARE DIFFERENT FROM THE WORLD. WHEN YOU LIVE FOR JESUS YOU ARE GOING TO GO AGAINST THE GRAIN OF THIS OLD WORLD.

2. SOMEONE ONCE SAID TO BILLY SUNDAY, “BILLY, YOU HAD BETTER QUIT PREACHING LIKE YOU'RE PREACHING, YOU'RE RUBBING THE OLD CAT THE WRONG WAY”. BILLY SUNDAY SAID, “THE OLD

CAT IS HEADED TOWARD HELL, AND IF SHE TURNS AROUND, I'D RUB HER THE RIGHT WAY”.

3. YOU SEE, THE WORLD DOESN'T MIND YOU TALKING ABOUT THE CHURCH, RELIGION, MOM, APPLE PIE, OR THE FLAG. BUT IF YOU STAND UP AGAINST THE LIQUOR INDUSTRY; YOU TAKE A STAND AGAINST ABORTION; YOU STAND UP AGAINST CAPITAL PUNISHMENT, AND THE DEMONS IN HELL WILL RISE UP AGAINST YOU. JESUS SAID, WHEN YOU LIVE FOR ME YOU'RE GOING TO BE DIFFERENT AND WHEN YOU DARE TO BE DIFFERENT YOU INSURE YOUR BEING PERSECUTED.

4. WHEN YOU LIVE FOR JESUS YOU WON'T HAVE TO GO LOOKING FOR TROUBLE. TROUBLE WILL NATURALLY COME LOOKING FOR YOU. RIGHTEOUSNESS IS ONE REASON WE ARE PERSECUTED.

B. RELATIONSHIP - VERSE 11

1. JESUS SAID ANOTHER REASON YOU'LL BE PERSECUTED IS NOT BECAUSE OF HOW YOU LIVE, BUT BECAUSE OF HOW HE LIVED. FRIEND, THE SAME WORLD THAT HATED JESUS 2000 YEARS AGO, HATES JESUS TODAY.

2. LISTEN TO JOHN 15:18-21 – “IF THE WORLD HATES YOU, YOU KNOW THAT IT HAS HATED ME BEFORE IT HATED YOU. IF YOU ARE OF THE WORLD THE WORLD WOULD LOVE ITS OWN, BUT BECAUSE YOU ARE NOT OF THE WORLD, BUT-I CHOSE YOU OUT OF THE WORLD, THEREFORE, THE WORLD HATES YOU. REMEMBER THE WORD THAT I SAID TO YOU, ‘A SLAVE IS NOT GREATER THAN ITS MASTER’, IF THEY PERSECUTED ME, THEY WILL ALSO PERSECUTE YOU IF THEY KEPT MY WORD, THEY WILL KEEP YOURS ALSO”. THE WORLD DOES NOT KNOW GOD, AND WHATEVER A PERSON IS IGNORANT OF, HE SUSPECTS, AND WHAT HE SUSPECTS HE FEARS, AND WHAT HE FEARS, HE ATTACKS.

3. LET A MAN PRAY A PRAYER BEFORE A CONVOCATION, NOBODY CARES. BUT YOU LET THAT MAN END HIS PRAYER IN THE NAME OF JESUS, AND PEOPLE WILL SCRAMBLE FOR COVER. YOU SEE, JESUS IS A STUMBLING BLOCK TO THE JEW. HE IS AN ENEMY TO THE MOSLIM. HE IS THE CURSE OF THE COMMUNIST. HE'S ANATHEMA TO THE ATHEIST. HE'S HATED BY THE HUMANIST. AND JESUS SAID, JUST BECAUSE OF ME, OF WHO I AM, AND WHO I CLAIM TO BE, YOU'RE GOING TO BE PERSECUTED.

4. THE ONLY WAY YOU CAN BE A FRIEND OF THIS WORLD, IS TO BE A ENEMY OF JESUS. AND THE ONLY WAY YOU CAN BE A FRIEND OF JESUS IS TO BE AN ENEMY OF THIS WORLD. AND SO, IF YOU'RE GOING TO LIVE FOR JESUS, AND IF JESUS IS GOING TO LIVE IN YOU, YOU ARE GOING TO BE PERSECUTED.

III. THE RESPONSE TO PERSECUTION

1. NOW THE IMPORTANT THING TO UNDERSTAND ABOUT ALL OF THIS IS NOT THAT WE ARE GOING TO BE PERSECUTED, OR EVEN WHY WE'RE GOING TO BE PERSECUTED, BUT HOW ARE WE GOING TO RESPOND TO PERSECUTION. NOW, THERE ARE BASICALLY TWO WAYS YOU CAN RESPOND TO PERSECUTION.

A. RETALIATE

1. YOU CAN GET EVEN. YOU CAN LIVE BY THE CODE, "AN EYE FOR AN EYE, AND A TOOTH FOR A TOOTH", AND THAT IS THE CARNAL, WORLDLY, FLESHLY WAY OF RESPONDING-TO PERSECUTION.

2. A BOY WAS TALKING TO HIS DAD, AND HE TOLD HIS DAD THAT ANOTHER BOY AT SCHOOL HAD WRONGED HIM, AND HE SAID, "DAD, I AM GOING TO GET EVEN". HIS DAD SAID, "IS THAT ALL YOU'RE GOING TO DO"? HE SAID, "WHAT DO YOU MEAN, DAD"? HE SAID, "SON, IF YOU GET EVEN YOU WILL BE EVEN. HE SAID, HOW WOULD YOU LIKE TO GET AHEAD OF HIM"? HE SAID, "OH, I WOULD LOVE TO GET AHEAD OF HIM". AND THEN HE READ MATTHEW 5:44-45.

3. YOU SEE, WE NEED TO UNDERSTAND THAT THERE ARE THREE LEVELS ON WHICH WE CAN LIVE. FIRST OF ALL WE CAN LIVE ON THE DEMONIC LEVEL. AND THAT IS WHEN WE RETURN EVIL FOR GOOD. OR, WE CAN LIVE ON THE DOMESTIC LEVEL. THAT IS, WE RETURN GOOD FOR GOOD AND WE RETURN EVIL FOR EVIL. BUT GOD WANTS US TO LIVE ON THE DIVINE LEVEL, AND THAT IS WHEN WE RETURN GOOD FOR EVIL.

B. REJOICE

1. JESUS' REMEDY AND PRESCRIPTION FOR PERSECUTION IS TO REJOICE AND TO BE GLAD. ONE OF THE GREATEST VERSES IN ALL OF THE BIBLE IS ACTS 5:41. PETER AND JOHN HAD BEEN BEATEN AND WHIPPED FOR PREACHING THE GOSPEL OF JESUS. THEY WERE RELEASED, WARNED NEVER TO PREACH ABOUT JESUS AGAIN, AND AS THEY WERE WALKING DOWN THE ROAD WITH BLOOD DRIPPING FROM THE WOUNDS ON THEIR BACK, WE'RE TOLD, "SO THEY WENT ON THEIR WAY FROM THE PRESENCE OF THE COUNCIL REJOICING THAT THEY

HAD BEEN CONSIDERED WORTHY TO SUFFER SHAME FOR HIS NAME". YOU SEE FRIEND, THE EARLY CHRISTIAN REJOICED IN LIGHT OF PERSECUTION, NOT IN SPITE OF PERSECUTION.

2. .MAYBE YOU HAVEN'T SUFFERED FOR GOD BECAUSE GOD HAS NOT CONSIDERED YOU WORTHY TO SUFFER FOR HIM. FRIEND, IF YOU'VE NEVER HAD A DOOR SLAMMED IN YOUR FACE; IF YOU'VE NEVER BEEN REVILED) IF YOU'VE .NEVER BEEN PERSECUTED; IF YOU'VE NEVER BEEN SLANDERED; IF YOU'VE NEVER BEEN CRITICIZED FOR THE LORD JESUS, DON'T BRAG ABOUT IT.

IV. THE REWARD OF PERSECUTION

1. JESUS SAID, "WHEN YOU REJOICE IN PERSECUTION, AND YOU RESPOND IN LOVE, YOU WILL HAVE A GREAT REWARD". THE BIBLE SAYS. IN II TIM. 2:12, "IF WE ENDURE WITH HIM, WE SHALL REIGN, WITH HIM". I WOULD RATHER BE IN A DUNGEON WITH JESUS THAN IN A PALACE WITHOUT HIM.

2. NOTICE IN VERSE 12 WE ARE TOLD OUR REWARD WILL BE GREAT. YO' SEE, THERE ARE GOING TO BE DEGREES OF REWARD IN .HEAVEN, AND HE BIBLE SAYS THOSE WHO HAVE SUFFERED SEVERELY WILL! REIGN SUPREMELY.

3. I REMEMBER A STORY OF AN OLD BATTERED MISSIONARY WHO WAS ON A SHIP COMING BACK FROM HIS TOUR OF SERVICE IN A FOREIGN LAND. HE HAD BEEN AWAY FROM AMERICA FOR TWENTY YEARS. UNBEKNOWNST TO HIM ON THAT SAME SHIP WAS PRESIDENT THEODORE ROOSEVELT. WELL, THIS BATTERED OLD MISSIONARY WAS HOPING FOR A GRAND WELCOME. HE SAW A GREAT CROWD, A GREAT THROG CHEERING AT THE DOCK. HE THOUGHT, "MY SOUL, THEY HAVE REMEMBERED ME AFTER ALL OF THESE YEARS". AS HE STARTED TO GET OFF THE BOAT, HE LOOKED UP AND SAW PRESIDENT ROOSEVELT AND HE REALIZED THAT THIS GREAT RECEPTION WAS NOT FOR HIM, BUT RATHER IT WAS FOR THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES. HE IMMEDIATELY GOT SO DEJECTED, SO DEPRESSED. HE SAID, "NO ONE IS HERE TO MEET ME, NO ONE EVEN CARES ABOUT MY TOUR OF SERVICE". HE SAID, "THEN THE HOLY SPIRIT WHISPERED INTO HIS HEART AND SAID TWO THINGS. NO. 1. THIS THROG IS NOTHING COMPARED TO YOUR HOMECOMING. AND HE SAID NO. 2, YOU AREN'T HOME YET". FRIEND, YOU REMEMBER EVEN IN THE DEEPEST, DARKEST, MOST DEPRESSING HOURS OF YOUR LIFE WHEN YOU ARE BEING PERSECUTED AND SLANDERED AND REVILED FOR THE NAME OF JESUS, GREAT IS YOUR REWARD IN HEAVEN.

“SUFFERING FOR JESUS”
MATT. 5:10-12

1. THIS IS INDEED A STRANGE VERSE WHEN WE TRULY UNDERSTAND WHAT IT SAYS. AS A MATTER OF FACT THE BIBLE IS A STRANGE BOOK FOR SOME OF ITS TEACHINGS ARE DIAMETRICALLY OPPOSITE TO WORLDLY WISDOM AND WORLDLY ADVICE. JESUS SAYS “BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO ARE PERSECUTED FOR THE SAKE OF JESUS CHRIST.” HAVE YOU EVER BEEN REVILED FOR THE LORD JESUS? HAVE YOU EVER BEEN KICKED AROUND BECAUSE YOU WERE A CHRISTIAN? HAVE YOU EVER BEEN SLANDERED OR MOCKED MAYBE AT HIGH SCHOOL BECAUSE YOU DARED TO TAKE A STAND FOR CHRIST AND FOR WHAT WAS RIGHT? WELL, CONGRATULATIONS. THAT’S WONDERFUL. THAT’S EXACTLY WHAT THE LORD IS SAYING HERE.

2. I LIKE THE WAY THE AMPLIFIED BIBLE TRANSLATES THIS 10TH VERSE: BLESSED AND HAPPY AND ENVIABLY FORTUNATE AND SPIRITUALLY PROSPEROUS ARE THOSE WHO ARE PERSECUTED. FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS SAKE. JESUS SAYS IN THE MIDST OF PERSECUTION REJOICE. BUT NOT ONLY DOES THE BIBLE SAY YOU OUGHT TO REJOICE IN THE MIDDLE OF PERSECUTION. THE BIBLE SAYS YOU OUGHT TO REJOICE IF YOU’VE GOT PROBLEMS. JAMES 1:2 SAYS, “CONSIDER IT ALL JOY MY BRETHERN WHEN YOU ENCOUNTER VARIOUS TRIALS.”

3. HAVE YOU EVER HAD A DOOR SLAMMED IN YOUR FACE BECAUSE YOU WANTED TO TALK TO SOMEBODY ABOUT JESUS? HOW DID YOU REACT OR PERHAPS YOU ARE A COLLEGE STUDENT AND SOMEONE HAS MADE FUN OF YOU BECAUSE OF YOUR STAND FOR CHRIST, WHAT WOULD YOU DO? SUPPOSE YOU WERE BEING KICKED AND CURSED IN A COMMUNIST PRISON BECAUSE OF YOUR CHRISTIAN FAITH. HOW WOULD YOU REACT? JUST EXACTLY HOW ARE WE TO HANDLE PERSECUTION?

1. THE CERTAINTY OF PERSECUTION

1. JESUS SAYS IN VERSE 11, “BLESSED ARE YOU WHEN MEN REVILE YOU AND PERSECUTE YOU.” NOT IF BUT WHEN. YOU SEE BELIEVING IN JESUS AND SUFFERING FOR JESUS ARE SIAMESE TWINS IN THE WORD OF GOD. FOR EXAMPLE LISTEN TO PHILIPPIANS 1:29, “FOR TO YOU IT HAS BEEN GRANTED FOR CHRIST’S SAKE NOT ONLY TO BELIEVE IN HIM BUT ALSO TO SUFFER FOR HIS SAKE.” DO YOU LIKE TO HEAR THE PROMISES OF THE BIBLE DO YOU LIKE TO RELY ON THE PROMISES OF GOD FOR YOUR LIFE WELL LISTEN TO THIS PROMISE. THE BIBLE SAYS IN TIMOTHY 3:11, “AND INDEED ALL WHO DESIRE TO LIVE GODLY IN CHRIST JESUS WILL BE PERSECUTED.”

2. YOU SEE ARE THESE WHO THAT WHEN YOU COME TO JESUS YOU’LL NEVER HAVE ANY MORE PROBLEMS. LIFE WILL BE A ROSEBED. WELL, FRIEND, IN A SENSE THAT IS TRUE. IT IS A BED OF ROSES TO FOLLOW JESUS BUT YOU JUST NEED TO REMEMBER THAT EVERY ROSEBED HAS ITS THORNS, AND WHEN YOU GET IN THE GOOD SHIP GRACE TO SAIL TO HEAVEN YOU NEED TO UNDERSTAND THAT GOD DOESN’T PROMISE SMOOTH SAILING. HE JUST PROMISES A SAFE LANDING.

3. NOW FOR SOME OF YOU IT IS HARD TO RELATE TO THIS VERSE BECAUSE YOU HAVE NEVER BEEN PERSECUTED FOR YOUR FAITH, YOU HAVE NEVER BEEN REVILED FOR YOUR FAITH. YOU’VE NEVER BEEN SLANDERED OR CURSED OR MOCKED OR MAD FUN OF BECAUSE YOU DARED TO A QUESTION. DOES THAT SAY SOMETHING ABOUT GOD OR DOES THAT SAY SOMETHING ABOUT YOU? DID YOU KNOW THAT EVERYONE OF THE DISCIPLES DIED A VIOLENT DEATH BECAUSE OF THEIR STAND FOR JESUS CHRIST? SOME PEOPLE THINK GOD LOVES US MORE THAN HE LOVED THOSE EARLY CHRISTIANS AND THAT’S WHY HE KEEPS US FROM PERSECUTION. FRIEND, IF WE ARE NOT BEING PERSECUTED LIKE THE EARLY CHRISTIANS DON’T THINK IT IS BECAUSE GOD LOVES US MORE THAN THE EARLY CHRISTIANS. THINK IT IS BECAUSE WE LOVE GOD LESS THAN THE EARLY CHRISTIANS.

4. I HEARD ABOUT A MAN WHO LIVED AN EASY ROSEBED CHRISTIAN LIFE WHO DIED AND WENT TO HEAVEN. HE FOUND HIMSELF WALKING BETWEEN TWO SAINTS AND HE ASKED ONE, “HOW DID YOU GET HERE?” “OH, HE SAID, “I WAS BURNED AT THE STAKE AS A MISSIONARY IN AFRICA.” THE MAN SAID, “WHY THAT’S AWFUL.” “NOT REALLY.” “YOU SEE IT WAS AN HONOR TO SUFFER FOR JESUS. AFTER ALL HE DIED FOR ME.” HE TURNED TO THE OTHER MAN AND SAID, “AND HOW DID YOU GET HERE?” HE SAID, “I WAS IN A COMMUNIST PRISON CAMP AND THEY TORTURED ME TO DEATH. SEE THE SCARS ON MY HEAD AND MY BODY WHERE I WAS BEATEN?” THE MAN SAID, “THAT’S TERRIBLE. NOT REALLY,” THE MAN REPLIED. “I JUST REJOICED. WHEN I COULD SUFFER FOR JESUS. “AFTER ALL HE DIED FOR ME.” THEY WALKED A LITTLE PIECE AND ALL OF A SUDDEN BOTH MEN TURNED TO THIS MAN AND SAID, “SAY, TELL US. HOW DID YOU SUFFER FOR JESUS?” FRIEND, WHEN YOU LIVE FOR JESUS, WHEN YOU LIVE FOR GOD, THE BIBLE MAKES A PROMISE. YOU WILL SUFFER PERSECUTION.

II. THE CAUSES OF PERSECUTION

WHAT ARE THE CAUSES? WHAT ARE THE REASONS THAT GOD'S PEOPLE ARE PERSECUTED? WELL JESUS SAID WHY A CHRISTIAN IS PERSECUTED:

A. CHRISTIAN CONDUCT

1. JESUS SAID THAT WHEN YOU LIVE A GODLY JESUS. HONORING, CHRIST-FILLED LIFE YOU WILL BE PERSECUTED. NOW THERE IS A DIFFERENCE BETWEEN PERSECUTION AND PUNISHMENT. YOU SEE SOMETIMES WHAT WE CALL PERSECUTION IS REALLY PUNISHMENT. IT IS REALLY JUSTLY DESERVED. YOU SEE THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN PUNISHMENT AND PERSECUTION IS THIS: PUNISHMENT IS WHAT YOU GET FROM GOOD MEN WHEN YOU DO EVIL. PERSECUTION IS WHAT YOU GET FROM BAD MEN WHEN YOU DO GOOD. TURN TO 1 PETER 4 AND LOOK AT VERSES 14 THROUGH 16.

2. YOU MUST ALWAYS MAKE SURE THAT YOU ARE BEING PERSECUTED FOR DOING WHAT IS RIGHT AND YOU MUST ALSO MAKE SURE THAT YOU ARE DOING THE RIGHT THING IN THE RIGHT WAY. YOU SEE YOU CAN EVEN WITNESS IN A WRONG FASHION. IF YOU TRY TO SHOVE YOUR FAITH DOWN SOMEONE'S THROAT, IF YOU ARE ABRASIVE OR OFFENSIVE OR IF YOU ARE VERY RUDE IN SHARING YOUR FAITH, THEN SOMETIMES YOU DESERVE PUNISHMENT. YOU DESERVE TO HAVE THE DOOR SLAMMED IN YOUR FACE. ALWAYS REMEMBER THAT WE ARE TO BE WITNESSES FOR JESUS. WE ARE NOT TO BE PROSECUTING ATTORNEYS. YOU SEE THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A WITNESS AND A PROSECUTING ATTORNEY IS A WITNESS SIMPLY TELLS WHAT HE HAS SEEN AND WHAT HE KNOWS AND A PROSECUTING ATTORNEY HANDLES THE CASE OF CRISTIANITY. WE ARE SIMPLY TO WITNESS TO THE TRUTH OF IT AND THEN LET THE LORD TAKE IT FROM THERE. BUT WHEN YOU DO LIVE FOR JESUS PEOPLE ARE GOING TO BE OFFENDED. SOME PEOPLE ARE GOING TO TAKE OFFENSE AT YOUR CHRISTIAN LIFE. DID YOU KNOW THAT THE ROOT MEANING OF THE WORD RIGHTEOUSNESS IS "TO DIVIDE OR TO BE DIFFERENT"? WHEN YOU LIVE FOR JESUS YOU ARE GOING AGAINST THE GRAIN OF THIS WORLD. JESUS SAID IN JOHN 15:19, "IF YOU WERE OF THE WORLD THE WORLD WOULD LOVE ITS OWN BUT BECAUSE YOU ARE NOT OF THE WORLD BUT I CHOSE YOU OUT OF THE WORLD THEREFORE THE WORLD HATES YOU." WHEN JESUS WAS ON EARTH HE WAS THE CAUSE OF DIVISION BETWEEN MOTHER AND DAUGHTER, FATHER AND

SON, BROTHER AGAINST BROTHER AND YOU WILL BE TOO WHEN YOU TAKE A STAND FOR JESUS.

3. SOMEONE ONCE SAID TO BILLY SUNDAY, "BILLY, YOU OUGHT TO QUIT PREACHING LIKE YOU DO. YOU'RE RUBBING THE OLD CAT THE WRONG WAY." BILLY SUNDAY SAID, "THE CAT IS HEADED TOWARD HELL IF HE'D TURN AROUND I'D RUB IT THE RIGHT WAY." YOU SEE JESUS IS OFFENSIVE TO THIS WORLD. HE IS THE ROCK OF OFFENSE. THERE IS THE OFFENSE OF THE CROSS. I'VE NOTICED THAT THE WORLD DOESN'T MIND TOO MUCH IF YOU TALK ABOUT THE CHURCH, IF YOU TALK ABOUT RELIGION, IF YOU TALK ABOUT GOD. BUT YOU TAKE A STAND FOR JESUS. YOU STAND UP AGAINST THE LIQUOR INDUSTRY, YOU STAND UP AGAINST ABORTION. YOU TAKE A STAND FOR CAPITAL PUNISHMENT AND EVERY DEMON IN HELL WILL RISE UP AGAINST YOU. WHEN YOU LIVE FOR JESUS, FRIEND, YOU WON'T HAVE TO GO LOOKING FOR TROUBLE. TROUBLE WILL SOME LOOKING FOR YOU. IF WE DO GOD'S WORK IN GOD'S WAY AT GOD'S TIME WITH GOD'S POWER YOU WILL HAVE GOD'S BLESSINGS BUT YOU WILL ALSO HAVE THE DEVIL'S CURSES. WHEN GOD OPENS THE WINDOWS OF HEAVEN TO BLESS YOU, THE DEVIL OPENS THE DOOR OF HELL TO BLAST YOU. GOD'S SMILE MEANS THE DEVIL'S FROWN. YOU WILL BE PERSECUTED FOR YOUR CHRISTIAN CONDUCT.

A. CHRISTIAN CONVICTION--VERSE 11

1. YOU NEED TO UNDERSTAND THAT THE SAME WORLD THAT HATED JESUS 2000 YEARS AGO HATES JESUS TODAY. LOOK AT JOHN 15:VERSES 20-21. BECAUSE THE WORLD DOES NOT KNOW GOD THEY DO NOT KNOW HIS SON THE LORD JESUS CHRIST. AND IGNORANCE ALWAYS BREEDS SUSPICION. WHAT PEOPLE DON'T KNOW OR DON'T UNDERSTAND THEY ARE SUSPICIOUS OF. AND SUSPICION ALWAYS REEDS FEAR. WHAT PEOPLE DON'T UNDERSTAND THEY ARE AFRAID OF AND WHATEVER A PERSON FEARS HE ATTACKS. THAT'S WHY SINFUL MEN ATTACK THE SON OF GOD AND CRUCIFIED HIM ON THE CROSS.

2. HAVE YOU EVER NOTICED THAT A MAN CAN PRAY A PRAYER AT A FOOTBALL STADIUM AND AS LONG AS HE JUST PRAYS THE PRAYER IN THE NAME OF GOD NOBODY GETS EXCITED. BUT JUST AS SOON AS HE ENDS A PRAYER IN THE NAME OF JESUS PEOPLE WILL SCRAMBLE FOR COVER. FOLKS, UNDERSTAND IT ONCE AND FOR ALL. JESUS IS NO FRIEND OF THIS WORLD. HE IS THE STUMBLING BLOCK TO THE JEW. HE IS AN ENEMY TO THE MOSLEM. HE IS A CURSE TO THE COMMUNIST. HE IS ANATHEMA TO THE ATHEIST AND HE IS HATED BY THE HUMANIST. THE CLOSER YOU ARE RELATED TO THIS MAN CALLED JESUS THE NEARER YOU'LL BE TO

THE FLAME OF PERSECUTION AND THE HOTTER IT WILL BE FOR YOU TO LIVE IN THIS WORLD.

3. MAY I GIVE YOU A PERFECT THERMOMETER TO MEASURE THE DEGREE YOUR DEVOTION TO JESUS CHRIST? YOU SEE HOW MUCH YOU'RE BEING PERSECUTED FOR YOUR FAITH AND THAT WILL TELL YOU HOW CLOSE YOU ARE TO THE LORD JESUS CHRIST. YOU SEE YOUR LOVE FOR JESUS IS THE THERMOSTAT OF YOUR LIFE BUT YOUR PERSECUTION IS THE THERMOMETER OF YOUR LIFE. IT MEASURES HOW MUCH YOU'RE TRULY LIKE JESUS.

III. THE CHALLENGE OF PERSECUTION

HOW ARE WE TO HANDLE PERSECUTION? WHEN YOU MAKE UP YOUR MIND YOU'RE GOING TO LIVE FOR GOD AND THE DEVIL MAKES UP HIS MIND HE IS GOING TO DO EVERYTHING TO KEEP YOU FROM IT AND HE SENDS THE FORCES OF HELL AGAINST YOU, HOW ARE YOU GOING TO HANDLE IT? IT IS SO VITALLY IMPORTANT YOU UNDERSTAND HOW TO HANDLE PERSECUTION FOR FRIEND YOU CAN DETERMINE HOW SPIRIT FILLED YOU ARE NOT BY HOW YOU ACT BUT HOW YOU REACT. WELL THERE ARE BASICALLY ONE OF TWO WAYS TO HANDLE PERSECUTION.

A. RETALIATE

1. YOU CAN GET EVEN. YOU CAN LIVE BY THE CODE AN EYE FOR AN EYE AND A TOOTH FOR A TOOTH. I HEARD ABOUT A YOUNG BOY WHO TOLD HIS DAD THAT A BOY HAD DONE SOMETHING WRONG TO HIM AND HE SAID, "DAD, I'M GOING TO GET EVEN." HIS DAD SAID, "IS THAT THE BEST YOU CAN DO?" AND THE SON SAID, "SIR?" HE SAID, "IS THAT ALL YOU'RE GOING TO DO. GET EVEN?" HE SAID, "YES SIR." HE SAID, HOW WOULD YOU LIKE TO GET AHEAD OF HIM NOT JUST GET EVEN. BUT GET AHEAD OF HIM?" HE SAID "OH, I WOULD LIKE TO DO THAT." THE DAD TURNED TO MATT. 5 AND READ VERSES 44-45, "BUT I SAY TO YOU LOVE YOUR ENEMIES AND PRAY FOR THOSE WHO PERSECUTE YOU IN ORDER THAT YOU MAY BE SONS OF YOUR FATHER WHO IS IN HEAVEN. FOR HE CAUSES HIS SON TO RISE ON THE EVIL AND THE GOOD AND SENDS RAIN ON THE RIGHTEOUS AND THE UNRIGHTEOUS."

2. THERE ARE ONLY 3 LEVELS ON WHICH A HUMAN BEING CAN LIVE. HE CAN LIVE ON THE DEMONIC LEVEL. HE CAN LIVE ON THE DOMESTIC LEVEL. OR HE CAN LIVE ON THE DIVINE LEVEL. NOW AT THE DEMONIC LEVEL WHEN YOU ARE LIVING LIKE THE DEVIL YOU

WILL RETURN EVIL FOR GOOD THE DOMESTIC LEVEL YOU WILL RETURN GOOD FOR GOOD AND EVIL FOR EVIL. DO UNTO OTHERS AS THEY DO UNTO YOU. BUT WHEN YOU LIVE ON THE DIVINE LEVEL YOU WILL RETURN GOOD FOR EVIL. THE LORD JESUS IS CAL INCA HIS DIVINE PEOPLE TO LIVE ON A DIVINE LEVEL DON'T LIVE AS SATAN RETURNING EVIL FOR GOOD. DON'T EVEN LIVE AS GOOD MEN DO RETURNING AND RETURN GOOD FOR EVIL.

B. REJOICE

1. NOW THIS IS THE STRANGE THING ABOUT THIS VERSE. HE BIBLE SAYS THAT WHEN THEY SLAP YOU ON ONE CHEEK, WHEN THEY CALL YOU NAMES, WHEN THEY REVILE YOU MOCK YOU AND PERSECUTE YOU, YOU ARE TO REJOICE. ONE OF THE GREATEST VERSES IN ALL THE BIBLE IS ACTS 5:40-41, "AND THEY TOOK HIS ADVICE AND AFTER CALLING THE APOSTLES IN THEY FLOGGED THEM ORDERED THEM TO SPEAK NO MORE IN THE NAME OF JESUS AND THEN RELEASED THEM SO THEY WENT ON THEIR WAY FROM THE PRESENCE OF THE COUNCIL REJOICING THAT, THEY HAD BEEN CONSIDERED WORTHY TO SUFFER SHAME FOR HIS NAME. "NOW THAT'S AN AMAZING THING. THE EARLY DISCIPLES DID NOT REJOICE IN SPITE OF PERSECUTION BUT IN LIGHT OF PERSECUTION.

2. DID YOU KNOW THAT IT IS A PRIVILEGE AND AN HONOR TO SUFFER FOR JESUS? THAT IT IS A MARK OF GOD'S APPROVAL? YOU KNOW ONE OF THE REASONS WHY I THINK WE DON'T SUFFER FOR GOD MORE THAN WE DO IS BECAUSE HE JUST DOESN'T CONSIDER US WORTHY TO SUFFER. IF YOU'VE NEVER HAD A DOOR SLAMMED IN YOUR FACE, IF YOU'VE NEVER BEEN REVILED FOR YOUR FAITH, IF YOU'VE NEVER BEEN PERSECUTED OR SLANDERED FOR „JESUS SAKE, ONE THING I CERTAINLY WOULDN'T DO IS BRAG ABOUT IT.

3. DID YOU KNOW THAT WE GET THE WORD MARTYR FROM THE GREEK WORD THAT MEANS "WITNESS?" WHEN STEPHEN SUFFERED PERSECUTION EVEN UNTO DEATH HE WAS A WITNESS WITHOUT EVEN KNOWING IT TO SAUL OF TARSUS. WHEN THE WORLD SEES A GODLY BELIEVER REJOICING IN PERSECUTION, FRIEND THAT IS WHEN THE WORLD REALIZES THE CHRISTIAN LIFE IS A LOT MORE THAN A MERE RELIGION. SOMEONE HAS SAID "THE GREATEST OPPORTUNITIES A CHRISTIAN HAS TO WITNESS IS WHEN THE STOVES ARE FLYING ALL AROUND HIM." WHEN PERSECUTION

COMES WE OUGHT TO REJOICE IN THE VERY FACE OF IT.

4. R. R. A. TORREY SAID WHEN HE WAS PASTOR OF THE MOODY CHURCH ONE SUNDAY NIGHT GOD BLESSED AND THEY HAD MANY PEOPLE SAVED AND THEREFORE HE WAS LATE LEAVING THE CHURCH. HE SAID HE NOTICED ONE OF HIS MOST BITTER ENEMIES IN THE CHURCH TALKING TO ANOTHER MAN ABOUT HIM. AND HE FIGURED HE WAS BEING CRITICIZED BUT HE WASN'T GOING TO LET THAT BOTHER HIM. DR. TORREY SAID AS HE STARTED TO LEAVE THE CHURCH ONE OF HIS GODLY LAYMEN AND GOOD FRIENDS IN THE CHURCH YELLED OUT TO HIM, "DR. TORREY, JUMP, JUMP." DR. TORREY ASKED HIM, "WHY SHOULD I JUMP?" HE SAID "IF YOU HAD HEARD WHAT THAT MAN SAID ABOUT YOU A WHILE AGO, YOU WOULD HAVE JUMPED." HE SAID, "WHY IS THAT?" HE SAID, "BECAUSE JESUS SAID IN LUKE 6 AND HE QUOTED VERSES 21 AND 23, "BLESSED WHAT ARE YOU WHEN MEN HATE YOU AND OSTRACIZE YOU AND REAP INSULTS UPON YOU AND SPURN YOUR NAME AS EVIL. BE GLAD IN THAT DAY AND LEAP FOR JOY. FOR BEHOLD YOUR REWARD IS GREAT IN HEAVEN." HE SAID, "JUMP, DR. TORREY, JUMP." FRIEND THAT OUGHT TO BE THE REACTION OF EVERY CHILD OF GOD. LEAP FOR JOY WHEN YOU ARE CONSIDERED WORTHY TO SUFFER FOR THE NAME OF JESUS.

IV. THE REWARD OF PERSECUTION

NOW THERE IS A REWARD THAT COMES FOR PERSECUTION. YOU NEVER SUFFER PAIN FOR GOD THAT YOU DON'T GET GAIN IN THE KINGDOM. NOW WHAT IS THE REWARD, THE COMPENSATION OF PERSECUTION?

A. IDENTIFICATION

1. NOTICE THE COMPANY YOU KEEP WHEN YOU ARE PERSECUTED FOR JESUS. MOSES WAS PERSECUTED. (NEHEMIAH WAS PERSECUTED. JOSEPH WAS PERSECUTED. JEREMIA WAS PERSECUTED. JESUS WAS PERSECUTED JAMES, JOHN, PAUL AND PETER WERE PERSECUTED. AND FRIEND WANT YOU TO KNOW THAT'S PRETTY GOOD COMPANY. THERE' S AN OLD SAYING THAT A MAN IS KNOWN BY THE COMPANY HE KEEPS. WELL, FRIEND IF THAT IS TRUE I DON'T MIND KEEPING THAT KIND OF COMPANY.

2. "THEY CLIMBED THE STEEP ASCENT TO HEAVEN THROUGH PERIL TOIL AND PAIN; OH GOD TO US MAY GRACE BE GIVEN TO FOLLOW IN THEIR TRAIN."

COUNT IT A JOY TO SUFFER FOR JESUS KNOWING THE COMPANY THAT YOU KEEP. FRIEND, WHAT THE WORLD USED TO CALL THE HALL OF SHAME GOD NOW CALLS THE HALL OF FAME.

B. CORONATION--VERSE 10

1. PAUL TELLS US IN II TIM. 2:12, "IF WE ENDURE WE SHALL REIGN WITH HIM." FRIEND, I WOULD RATHER BE IN A DUNGEON WITH US THAN IN A PALACE WITHOUT HIM. HE OUGHT NOT TO SHY AWAY FROM PERSECUTION. WE OUGHT TO STAND UP TO PERSECUTION.

2. SOME PEOPLE WANT TO TAKE THE EASY WAY OUT. SOME PEOPLE DON'T EVER WANT TO WALK A BUMPY ROAD TO ME PEOPLE WANT TO GO TO HEAVEN ON EASY STREET AND NEVER EVER SUFFER ANY PAIN. WELL, FRIEND, THAT'S NOT ME. AND I DON'T BELIEVE THAT OUGHT TO BE THE DESIRE OF ANY CHILD OF GOD. FRIEND, I WANT YOU TO KNOW IT PAYS TO SERVE JESUS BUT IT ALSO COSTS TO SERVE JESUS AND WE OUGHT TO BE WILLING TO PAY THE COSTS.

ARE THERE NO FOES FOR ME TO FACE
MUST I NOT STEM THE FLOOD
IS THIS VILE WORLD A FRIEND TO GRACE
TO HELP ME ON TO GOD?
SURE I MUST FIGHT IF I WOULD REIGN
INCREASE MY COURAGE LORD;
I'LL BEAR THE TOIL ENDURE THE PAIN
SUPPORTED BY THY WORD.

WE ARE GOING TO SUFFER ANYWAY. YOU'RE GOING TO SUFFER WHETHER YOU LIVE FOR JESUS OR WHETHER YOU DON'T. WHY DON'T WE JUST GO AHEAD AND SUFFER AS CHAMPIONS FOR CHRIST.

MATTHEW 6:9-13

“THE PRAYER THAT SAYS IT ALL”

INTRODUCTION

1. LUKE TELLS US IN HIS 11TH CHAPTER THAT ON ANOTHER OCCASION WHEN JESUS GAVE WHAT IS CALLED THE LORD’S PRAYER, IT WAS AT THE REQUEST OF HIS DISCIPLES. THEY CAME TO HIM AND SAID, “LORD, TEACH US TO PRAY.” NOW THEY DID NOT JUST MERELY ASK HIM TO TEACH THEM HOW TO PRAY, THEY ASKED HIM TO TEACH THEM TO PRAY.

2. IN RESPONSE TO THAT REQUEST HE GAVE THEM WHAT IS NORMALLY CALLED THE LORD’S PRAYER. BUT THIS IS REALLY NOT THE LORD’S PRAYER. THIS IS YOUR PRAYER AND MY PRAYER. THE LORD’S PRAYER IS ACTUALLY RECORDED FOR US IN THE 17TH CHAPTER OF JOHN. THIS PRAYER WAS A GIFT FROM THE LORD TO HIS DISCIPLES THAT THEY MIGHT LEARN THE ELEMENTS THAT GO INTO EFFECTIVE PRAYING.

3. I CAN CERTAINLY UNDERSTAND WHY THEY ASKED JESUS TO TEACH THEM TO PRAY. I HAVE OFTEN WONDERED HOW WONDERFUL IT WOULD BE IF YOU COULD SEND YOUR CHILDREN TO A SCHOOL WHERE YOU KNEW. THAT IN EVERY SUBJECT THAT THEY STUDIED THEY WOULD HAVE THE WORLD’S GREATEST PROFESSOR. WOULDN’T IT HAVE BEEN WONDERFUL IF YOUR SCIENCE PROFESSOR HAD BEEN ALBERT EINSTEIN? WOULDN’T IT BE GREAT IF YOU COULD HAVE STUDIED ART UNDER A MAN BY THE NAME OF REMBRANDT? CAN YOU IMAGINE STUDYING DRAMA UNDER A PLAYWRIGHT BY THE NAME OF SHAKESPEARE? CAN YOU EVEN CONCEIVE OF STUDYING POLITICAL SCIENCE AT THE FEET OF THOMAS JEFFERSON? WOULDN’T IT BE FANTASTIC IF YOU COULD HAVE LEARNED MUSIC UNDER A MUSICIAN BY THE NAME OF BEETHOVEN?

4. WELL THAT IS NOT POSSIBLE. BUT THANK GOD WE DO HAVE THE GREATEST TEACHER WHO EVER LIVED TO TEACH US THE SUBJECT OF PRAYER. THAT IS NONE OTHER THAN THE LORD JESUS CHRIST.

5. IF EVER A GENERATION NEEDED TO LEARN HOW TO PRAY AS WELL AS TO LEARN TO PRAY, IT IS THIS GENERATION I BELIEVE THE GREAT RIGHT WHEN HE SAID:

MORE THINGS ARE WROUGHT BY PRAYER
THAN THIS WORLD DREAMS OF...

THAT BEING TRUE, WE NEED TO LEARN TO PRAY.

6. BUT BEFORE WE PLUNGE INTO THIS FANTASTIC LESSON ON PRAYER, KEEP IN MIND A WARNING THAT JESUS GAVE IN THE VERSES IMMEDIATELY PRECEDING THIS PRAYER, HE HAD JUST WARNED AGAINST THE DANGER OF PUBLIC PRAYING: THE DANGER OF PRAYING ONLY TO BE SEEN BY MEN.

7. WHEN JESUS SHARED THIS PRAYER WITH HIS DISCIPLES IN THE HOPES OF TEACHING THEM TO PRAY, HE WAS NOT GIVING THEM A PRAYER PRIMARILY MEANT FOR SCHOOL KIDS TO RECITE IN UNISON TOGETHER AFTER A FOOTBALL GAME, OR FOR SOME GROUP TO RECITE AT A FORMAL FUNCTION. AS A MATTER OF FACT, TOO MANY PEOPLE REPEAT THE LORD’S PRAYER INSTEAD OF PRAYING THE LORD’S PRAYER. THIS WAS PRIMARILY A MODEL TO BE USED IN OUR PRIVATE PRAYING, NOT IN OUR PUBLIC PRAYING. I WANT TO WARN YOU THAT PRAYER, NO MATTER HOW BEAUTIFUL, HOW ELOQUENT, HOW SWEET SOUNDING IT MAY BE, IF IT IS PERFORMED ONLY IN THE PRESENCE OF MEN AND FOR THE PRAISE OF MEN, IT IS AN EFFORT IN FUTILITY.

8. I HEARD ABOUT A YOUNG LAWYER WHO HAD JUST OPENED UP A BRAND NEW OFFICE. HE WAS SEATED BEHIND HIS SHINY NEW DESK, EAGERLY AWAITING HIS FIRST CLIENT. SOON HE HEARD FOOTSTEPS IN THE HALL, THEN A HAND ON THE DOORKNOB. HE PICKED UP THE TELEPHONE AND BEGAN TO CARRY ON A FAKE CONVERSATION.

9. “YES, YES, I WILL HAVE MY SECRETARY GET TO THAT AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. UNDERSTAND NOW MY SCHEDULE IS VERY HEAVY. I HAVE A LOT OF PEOPLE I NEED TO SEE SO YOU MAY NEED TO CALL ME BACK IN A FEW DAYS.”

10. HE THEN MOTIONED TOWARD THE DOOR AND SAID, “COME IN, COME IN.”

11. THIS STRANGER WAS NOW IN THE OFFICE LISTENING TO THIS LAWYER TALK ON THE TELEPHONE AND GIVE HIS VERSION OF THIS HIGH LEVEL CONVERSATION. FINALLY, THE LAWYER PUT THE RECEIVER BACK ON THE HOOK AND TURNED TO WHAT HE HOPED WOULD BE A CLIENT. HE SAID, “NOW SIR, WHAT MAY I DO FOR YOU?”

12. THE MAN SMILED AND SAID, “I AM FROM THE PHONE COMPANY AND I CAME TO CONNECT YOUR TELEPHONE.”

13. SO MUCH OF OUR PRAYING, I'M AFRAID, IS JUST LIKE THAT. WE ARE PRAYING TO BE SEEN BY MEN, AND PRAYING THROUGH A DISCONNECTED SOURCE. SO MUCH CAN BE LEARNED FROM THE LORD'S PRAYER IF WE WILL LISTEN TO THE MASTER TEACHER.

I. THE DIRECTION OF THE PRAYER

1. "IN THIS MANNER, THEREFORE, PRAY: OUR FATHER IN HEAVEN, HALLOWED BE YOUR NAME." (V.9) NOW IMMEDIATELY WE LEARN THAT THE FOCUS OF PRAYER IS NOT TO BE ON OURSELVES, OUR NEEDS, OUR DESIRES, BUT RATHER ON THE ONE TO WHOM WE PRAY. THIS VERSE REVEALS SEVERAL THINGS ABOUT THE GOD THAT ANSWERS PRAYER.

A. HE IS A PERSONAL GOD

1. WE ARE TO PRAY TO "OUR FATHER." WE ARE NOT PRAYING TO "THE FORCE" IN STAR WARS. WE ARE NOT PRAYING "TO THE MAN UPSTAIRS." WE ARE NOT PRAYING TO "A SUPREME BEING." WE ARE PRAYING TO THE ONE WHO SHOULD BE OUR HEAVENLY FATHER. GOD IS A PERSONAL GOD AND HE WANTS TO BE JUST AS PERSONAL TO YOU AS A FATHER IS PERSONAL TO HIS SON.

2. BUT THAT TELLS US THAT IN ORDER TO PRAY WE MUST BE CHILDREN OF GOD. NOW NOT EVERYONE HAS THE RIGHT TO CALL GOD HIS FATHER. THE ONLY PERSON WHO HAS THE RIGHT TO CALL GOD HIS FATHER IS THE ONE WHO IS A CHILD OF GOD. IN ORDER TO BE A CHILD OF GOD YOU MUST BE BORN INTO THE FAMILY OF GOD.

3. NOW THERE ARE THOSE WHO SAY THAT WE ARE ALL GOD'S CHILDREN, THAT THE HUMAN RACE IS JUST ONE BIG BROTHERHOOD. WELL THE FACT IS, THAT IS JUST NOT TRUE.

4. SOMEONE OBJECTS AND SAYS, "NOW WAIT A MINUTE PASTOR. GOD CREATED EVERYBODY, SO GOD IS THE FATHER OF EVERYBODY." I AM SORRY BUT ONE DOES NOT FOLLOW FROM THE OTHER. GOD DOES NOT BECOME YOUR FATHER BY CREATION. HE BECOMES YOUR FATHER BY REGENERATION. GOD CREATED CATS AND DOGS AND FLIES AND FROGS, BUT HE IS NOT THEIR FATHER, HE IS ONLY THEIR CREATOR.

5. YOU CAN ONLY BECOME A CHILD OF GOD BY BEING

BORN AGAIN INTO HIS KINGDOM. THE BIBLE SAYS IN JOHN 1:12, "BUT AS MANY AS RECEIVED HIM, TO THEM HE GAVE THE RIGHT TO BECOME CHILDREN OF GOD, EVEN TO THOSE WHO BELIEVE IN HIS NAME."

6. BUT AT THE SAME TIME IF GOD IS YOUR FATHER, AND YOU ARE HIS CHILD, YOU SHOULD TALK TO GOD JUST AS A CHILD WOULD TALK TO HIS FATHER. ONE OF THE THINGS THAT JESUS IS TRYING TO TEACH US HERE IS THAT PRAYER IS TO BE A SIMPLE NATURAL ACT OF TALKING TO GOD.

7. I GET AMUSED WHEN I HEAR SOME PEOPLE PRAY. WHEN YOU TALK TO THEM ONE MOMENT THEY TALK LIKE A NORMAL HUMAN BEING. BUT THEN THEY BOW THEIR HEADS, THEY DEEPEN THEIR VOICES, THEY TURN THE CLOCK OF THEIR LANGUAGE BACK ABOUT 400 YEARS, AND THEY BEGIN TO THROW OUT THEE'S, AND THOU'S AND THY'S AND WHETHER'S AND WHATSOEVER'S AS IF THEY WERE GOING OUT OF STYLE. I BEGIN TO WONDER WHO IN THE WORLD THEY ARE TALKING TO.

8. SUPPOSE ONE OF MY YOUNG SONS MET ME AT THE DOOR WHEN I CAME HOME AND SAID, "OH, HAIL THOU EMINENT PASTOR OF FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH. I BESEECH THEE THAT THOU Wouldest GRANT TO THY SON, WHOM THOU LOVEST, SOME FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE, THAT HE MAY SOJOURN TO YON MARKETPLACE FOR SOME INSTRUMENTS OF PLEASURE."

9. I PROBABLY WOULD LOOK AT MY SON AND SAY "KNOCK IT OFF KID, AND TELL ME WHAT YOU WANT."

10. YOU SEE, IT WOULD BE A LOT BETTER IF MY SON WOULD JUST SAY TO ME, "DAD, I LOVE YOU. I'M SO GLAD YOU'RE HOME. HOW ABOUT GIVING ME \$5.00 SO, I CAN GO DOWN TO THE STORE AND BUY SOME ICE CREAM."

11. I AM AMAZED TO HEAR SOME YOUNG CHRISTIANS SAY THAT THEY DO NOT KNOW HOW TO PRAY MY DEAR FRIEND, IF YOU KNOW HOW TO TALK, YOU KNOW HOW TO PRAY. IF YOU CAN SAY I LOVE YOU, DAD, YOU CAN SAY, "I LOVE YOU, FATHER." YOU CAN SAY, "DAD, I NEED THIS." YOU CAN SAY, "GOD, I NEED THAT." IF YOU CAN SAY, "DAD, YOU ARE A WONDERFUL DAD," YOU CAN SAY, "GOD, YOU ARE A WONDERFUL GOD." PRAYER OUGHT TO BE SUPERNATURALLY NATURAL, AND NATURALLY SUPERNATURAL; YOU ARE TALKING TO A PERSONAL GOD.

B. HE IS A POWERFUL GOD

1. HE IS OUR FATHER “WHO IS IN HEAVEN.” SO OFTEN WE WONDER “WHERE IS GOD WHEN BAD THINGS HAPPEN TO GOOD PEOPLE?” WHERE IS GOD WHEN YOU WATCH THE WAVES OF INJUSTICE ROLL OVER THE SHORES OF OUR COURTS? WHERE IS GOD WHEN YOU HEAR THE WINDS OF COMMUNISM BLOWING THROUGH THE WALLS OF FREEDOM? WHERE IS GOD WHEN INNOCENT BABIES DIE AND GUILTY CRIMINALS GO FREE? THE ANSWER, DEAR FRIEND, IS THIS: GOD IS IN HEAVEN AND NOTHING HAS ESCAPED HIS NOTICE.

2. THE BIBLE SAYS IN PROVERBS 5:21, “FOR THE WAYS OF MAN ARE BEFORE THE EYES OF THE LORD, AND HE PONDERES ALL HIS PATHS.” THE EYES OF THE LORD ARE ON EVERY MAN, EVERY WOMAN, EVERY BOY, EVERY GIRL, AND HE WATCHES ALL OF THEIR PATHS. YOU CANNOT GO WHERE GOD DOES NOT. SEE. YOU CANNOT SPEAK SO LOW THAT GOD CANNOT HEAR. YOU CANNOT THINK SO SECRETLY THAT GOD DOES NOT AND CANNOT READ YOUR MIND. YOU ARE PRAYING TO A POWERFUL GOD.

C. HE IS A PREEMINENT GOD

1. “HALLOWED BE YOUR NAME.” IN PRAYER GOD’S NAME IS TO BE EXALTED. ONE OF THE PURPOSES OF PRAYER IS TO EXALT THE NAME OF GOD. NOW THAT DOES NOT MEAN THAT YOU CAN MAKE GOD’S NAME BETTER. IT IS ALREADY THE GREATEST NAME ON EARTH. BUT YOU CAN MAKE GOD’S NAME BETTER KNOWN.

2. DAVID SAID IN PSALM 34:3, “OH, MAGNIFY THE LORD WITH ME, AND LET US EXALT HIS NAME TOGETHER.” TOO MANY CHRISTIANS HAVE CALLED ON THE NAME OF THE LORD TO BE SAVED, BUT THAT’S THE LAST TIME THEY CALL ON THE NAME OF THE LORD. WE ARE NOT ONLY TO CALL ON THAT NAME, WE ARE TO EXALT THAT NAME. WE ARE TO LIFT UP THAT NAME, WE ARE TO MAGNIFY THAT NAME. GOD IS A PREEMINENT GOD, AND THE EXALTATION OF HIS NAME, HIS GLORY, HIS CHARACTER, HIS PERSON SHOULD BE PREEMINENT IN OUR LIVES.

II. THE DESIRE OF THE PRAYER

1. “YOUR KINGDOM COME. YOUR WILL BE DONE ON EARTH AS IT IS IN HEAVEN.” (V.10) NOW IMMEDIATELY WE ARE TOLD THAT PRAYER HAS ONE PURPOSE AND THAT IS TO SEEK AND TO SECURE THE WILL OF GOD. THE BIBLE SAYS IN 1 JOHN 5:14, “NOW THIS IS THE CONFIDENCE THAT WE HAVE IN HIM, THAT IF WE ASK ANYTHING

ACCORDING TO HIS WILL, HE HEARS US.” SOMEONE HAS WELL SAID THAT, “NOTHING LIES BEYOND THE WAY OF PRAYER, EXCEPT THAT WHICH LIES OUTSIDE THE WILL OF GOD.”

2. PRAYER IS LIKE A TRAIN. THAT TRAIN IS TO RUN BETWEEN TWO TRACKS. IF THAT TRAIN GETS OFF THE TRACKS IT WILL WRECK. NOW THE TRAIN OF PRAYER IS ALWAYS TO RUN BETWEEN THE TWO TRACKS OF THE WILL OF GOD. BUT THAT RAISES A QUESTION. HOW CAN WE KNOW THE WILL OF GOD? WELL IN ORDER TO KNOW THE WILL OF GOD YOU MUST KNOW THREE THINGS.

3. 1) YOU MUST KNOW THE WORD OF GOD. THE REASON MOST CHRISTIANS DO NOT KNOW GOD’S WILL IS BECAUSE THEY DO NOT KNOW GOD’S WORD. THE BIBLE IS TO BE “A LAMP UNTO OUR FEET AND A LIGHT UNTO OUR PATH.” NOW IF YOU ARE OUT ON A DARK NIGHT AND YOU DON’T HAVE A LIGHT OR A LAMP TO GUIDE YOU, YOU ARE NOT GOING TO KNOW WHICH WAY TO GO. IT IS THE SAME WAY WITH THE PERSON WHO DOES NOT STUDY THE WORD OF GOD.

4. BUT YOU ARE ALSO TO KNOW THE WAYS OF GOD. IN OTHER WORDS, YOU HAVE GOT TO KNOW HIS CHARACTER. THE BETTER THAT A CHILD KNOWS HIS FATHER, THE BETTER THAT CHILD KNOWS WHAT HIS FATHER WOULD DO IN A CERTAIN SITUATION OR WHAT HIS FATHER WOULD DESIRE IN A CERTAIN SITUATION. A CHILD WOULD NEVER GO TO HIS FATHER AND ASK HIS FATHER FOR SOMETHING THAT WOULD HURT HIM, OR THAT WOULD BE EVIL OR SINFUL. WHEN A MAN KNOWS THE WAYS OF GOD BECAUSE HE HAS STUDIED THE WORD OF GOD, HE WILL KNOW BETTER HOW TO PRAY TO GOD.

5. BUT A MAN SHOULD ALSO KNOW THE WORK OF GOD. THAT IS, HE SHOULD ALSO KNOW THE WORK OF GOD WORKING AND THE LEADING OF GOD THROUGH HIS HOLY SPIRIT. JUDE, V.20, TELLS US THAT WE SHOULD PRAY IN THE HOLY SPIRIT. PAUL TOLD US THE SAME THING IN EPH, 6:18. YOU SEE, REAL PRAYER ALWAYS INVOLVES THE TRINITY, IT INVOLVES THE FATHER, THE SON, AND THE HOLY SPIRIT. WE ARE TO PRAY TO THE FATHER, THROUGH THE SON, IN THE HOLY SPIRIT.

6. BUT ALL OF THIS IS SO THAT WE MIGHT PRAY ACCORDING TO THE WILL OF GOD. PRAYER IS NOT TO GET WHAT YOU WANT IT IS TO GET WHAT GOD WANTS. PRAYER IS NOT TO TELL GOD WHAT’S ON YOUR MIND. PRAYER IS TO FIND OUT WHAT’S ON HIS MIND. YOU

SEE, THE PURPOSE OF PRAYER IS NOT TO GET GOD IN LINE WITH OUR WILL. IT IS TO GET OUR WILL IN LINE WITH GOD.

7. THE FIRST ADAM PRAYED IN THE GARDEN OF EDEN, THE SECOND ADAM PRAYED IN THE GARDEN OF GETHSEMANE. BUT THERE WAS A TREMENDOUS DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE TWO. JESUS PRAYED "NOT MY WILL, BUT THINE BE DONE." BUT ADAM PRAYED, "NOT THY WILL, BUT MINE BE DONE."

8. I'M AFRAID THAT TOO OFTEN WE RUSH INTO THE PRESENCE OF GOD WHEN WE PRAY WITH THIS KIND OF ATTITUDE, "LISTEN LORD, YOUR SERVANT IS SPEAKING;" WHEN OUR ATTITUDE OUGHT TO BE, "SPEAK LORD, FOR YOUR SERVANT IS LISTENING." THE DESIRE OF ALL REAL PRAYER, TRUE PRAYER, GODLY PRAYER, IS TO GET IN TUNE AND IN TOUCH AND THEN TO TURN ON TO THE WILL OF GOD.

III. THE DEPENDENCE OF THE PRAYER

1. "GIVE US THIS DAY OUR DAILY BREAD." (V.11) I AM AMAZED AT HOW MUCH PEOPLE TODAY, IN THIS MATERIALISTIC SOCIETY, TAKE EVEN THEIR DAILY BREAD FOR GRANTED. WHEN YOU GIVE GOD THANKS, EVEN FOR THE FOOD YOU EAT, YOU ARE EXPRESSING THAT YOU ARE TOTALLY DEPENDENT UPON GOD AND YOU ARE ACKNOWLEDGING THAT EVERYTHING YOU HAVE HAS BEEN GIVEN TO YOU BY GOD. THE BIBLE SAYS THAT VERY THING. "EVERY GOOD GIFT AND EVERY PERFECT GIFT IS FROM ABOVE, AND COMES DOWN FROM THE FATHER OF LIGHTS, WITH WHOM THERE IS NO VARIATION OR SHADOW OF TURNING." (JAMES 1:17)

2. THE NEXT TIME YOU SIT DOWN TO EVEN EAT A PIECE OF BREAD, YOU REMEMBER"

BEHIND THE BREAD LIES THE SNOWY FLOUR
AND BEHIND THE FLOUR, THE MILL;
BUT BEHIND THE MILL LIES THE FIELD OF WHEAT
THE RAIN, AND THE FATHER'S WILL.

3. WE OUGHT TO BE GRATEFUL THAT WE ARE DEPENDENT ON A LOVING HEAVENLY FATHER WHO EVEN GIVES US THE FOOD THAT WE EAT. I DO NOT KNOW OF ANYTHING THAT IRRITATES ME MORE THAN TO SEE PEOPLE WHO EAT WITHOUT SAYING A BLESSING. MANY CHRISTIANS DO THAT. MANY OF OUR CHRISTIAN BUSINESSMEN WILL EAT IN A RESTAURANT AND NOT PRAY AND THANK GOD FOR THEIR FOOD.

4. THE GREAT PREACHER, HARRY IRONSIDE, WAS IN A RESTAURANT ONE DAY EATING WITH A FRIEND OF HIS WHO HAPPENED TO BE AN ATHEIST. AS THEY RECEIVED THEIR FOOD, HE BOWED AND HAD A BLESSING BEFORE HIS MEAL.

5. THE ATHEIST SAID, "YOU KNOW, I THINK THAT IS ONE OF THE MOST FOOLISH THINGS I HAVE EVER SEEN." HE SAID, "WHEN I SIT DOWN AT A MEAL I DON'T STOP AND PRAY, I JUST DIG IN AND EAT."

6. HARRY IRONSIDE SAID, "HUH, YOU ARE JUST LIKE MY DOG. MY DOG DOES THAT." WELL FRIEND, A DOG MAY NOT KNOW IT, AND A PIG MAY NOT KNOW IT, BUT YOU OUGHT TO ACKNOWLEDGE THE SOURCE OF YOUR BLESSINGS FROM GOD.

7. NOTICE THAT WE SHOULD ASK FOR BREAD AND NOT FOR PIE. THE BIBLE SAYS, "GOD SHALL SUPPLY ALL OF YOUR NEEDS," BUT IT DOES NOT SAY, "HE WILL SUPPLY ALL OF YOUR WANTS." I AM SO GLAD THAT WE CAN RELY, NOT ONLY UPON A LOVING HEAVENLY FATHER, BUT A WISE HEAVENLY FATHER WHO WILL ALWAYS GIVE US EVERYTHING WE NEED, BUT NOT NECESSARILY EVERYTHING THAT WE WANT. I CAN THINK OF MANY TIMES THAT I GOT THINGS I NEEDED THAT I DID NOT WANT. A MILLION TIMES MY DAD SAID TO ME, "SON, YOU NEED A SPANKING." HE WAS RIGHT, BUT I CERTAINLY DID NOT WANT ONE.

8. NOTICE AGAIN THAT WE ARE TO ASK FOR OUR "DAILY" BREAD. WE ARE NOT TO ASK FOR TOMORROW'S BREAD, JUST FOR TODAY'S. JESUS WAS A MASTER PSYCHOLOGIST. HE WAS TEACHING US HERE TO LIVE ONE DAY AT A TIME. IF YOU REMEMBER, WHEN GOD WAS SUPPLYING ISRAEL WITH THAT HEAVENLY BREAD CALLED MANNA, HE WOULD ONLY GIVE THEM ONE DAY'S SUPPLY AT A TIME. IF THEY TRIED TO GATHER MORE THAN A DAY'S SUPPLY, IT WOULD ROT IN THEIR HANDS. FAITH NOT ONLY TRUSTS GOD FOR TODAY, BUT IT BELIEVES GOD FOR TOMORROW.

IV. THE DEMAND OF THE PRAYER

1. "AND FORGIVE US OUR DEBTS, AS WE FORGIVE OUR DEBTORS." (V.12) NOW THIS SIMPLE LITTLE VERSE REMINDS US OF TWO THINGS WE NEED TO REMEMBER WHEN WE PRAY.

A. WE NEED TO GET FORGIVENESS

1. JESUS SAYS THAT POWERFUL PRAYER MUST COME FROM A PURE HEART. ONE PRAYER PROMISE THAT IS AS TRUE AS ANY

PRAYER PROMISE FOUND IN THE BIBLE IS PSALM 66:18, "IF I REGARD INIQUITY IN MY HEART, THE LORD WILL NOT HEAR."

2. YOU NEED TO REMEMBER THAT IF THERE IS SIN IN YOUR HEART, THERE IS GOING TO BE A LEAK IN YOUR PRAYERS. YOU CANNOT PRAY TO A HEAVENLY FATHER AND EXPECT AN ANSWER AS LONG AS YOU HAVE A REBELLIOUS SPIRIT, AS LONG AS YOU HAVE A STUBBORN HEART THAT STEADFASTLY REFUSES TO LET GO OF SIN IN YOUR LIFE. SIN SHORT CIRCUITS THE POWER OF PRAYER. EVERY PRAYER, PRACTICALLY SPEAKING, SHOULD CONTAIN THE ELEMENT OF CONFESSION AND CLEANSING.. JUST AS CLOGGED ARTERIES MUST BE CLEARED IN ORDER FOR THE BLOOD TO FLOW EASILY. LIKEWISE THE PRAYER CHANNEL TO HEAVEN MUST BE FREED FROM THE DEBRIS OF SIN IN ORDER FOR PRAYER TO FLOW EASILY TO GOD.

B. WE NEED TO GIVE FORGIVENESS

1. YOU SEE, THERE CAN BE NO WORSHIP HEAVENWARD, UNLESS THERE IS FELLOWSHIP EARTHWARD. GOD HAS SO MADE YOU THAT YOU CANNOT AND YOU WILL NOT BE RIGHT WITH HIM IF YOU ARE NOT RIGHT WITH A BROTHER OR A SISTER IN CHRIST. A GRUDGE IS A SLUDGE THAT DAMS THE RIVER OF PRAYER.

2. PETER WARNED HUSBANDS AND WIVES THAT THEY MUST BE RIGHT WITH GOD "LEST THEIR PRAYERS BE HINDERED." WHEN YOU TRY TO PRAY WITH A GRUDGE OR A BITTER FEELING IN YOUR HEART, YOUR PRAYER WILL BOUNCE OFF THE CEILINGS. THE HEAVENS WILL TURN TO BRASS; GOD WILL SHUT DOWN THE PRAYERLINE.

3. ONE OF THE PURPOSES OF PRAYER IS TO KEEP OUR HEARTS CLEAN AND PURE BEFORE THE LORD.

V. THE DELIVERANCE OF THE PRAYER

1. "AND DO NOT LEAD US INTO TEMPTATION, BUT DELIVER US FROM THE EVIL ONE." WE ARE TO PRAY EACH DAY TO BE DELIVERED FROM THE EVIL ONE. YOU ARE IN A WAR RIGHT NOW, WHETHER YOU CAN HEAR THE SHOTS BEING FIRED OR NOT, AND YOUR WAR IS WITH THE DEVIL. THE DEVIL RIGHT NOW IS DOING EVERYTHING HE CAN TO DISCOURAGE YOU, TO DEFILE YOU, TO DEFEAT YOU, TO DEVOUR YOU.

2. YOU SEE, SATAN'S REAL WAR IS NOT WITH US, HIS REAL WAR IS WITH GOD. BUT SATAN KNOWS THAT HE CANNOT HARM GOD. HE CANNOT GET TO GOD. BUT HE ALSO KNOWS THAT IF YOU CANNOT HARM SOMEONE DIRECTLY, THEN THE NEXT BEST THING IS TO HARM SOMEONE THAT SOMEONE LOVES. HE KNOWS THAT GOD LOVES US, SO HE AIMS HIS HELLISH ARTILLERY AT US, HOPING TO HURT GOD.

3. DID YOU KNOW THAT YOUR ONLY PROTECTION AND YOUR REAL PROTECTION IN THE SPIRITUAL WAR YOU WAGE AGAINST SATAN, IS PRAYER? YOUR PROTECTION IS PROVIDED THROUGH PRAYER. THE PRAYER FOR DELIVERANCE FROM THE EVIL ONE IS PREVENTATIVE MEDICINE.

4. EACH DAY WE NEED TO PRAY FOR FORGIVENESS FOR OUR SINS, BUT I AM AFRAID THAT WE HAVE BEEN ASKING TOO MUCH FOR FORGIVENESS AND NOT ASKING ENOUGH FOR DELIVERANCE. TOO OFTEN THE AVERAGE CHRISTIAN SPENDS HIS ENTIRE LIFE CONFESSING TO GOD THE SAME OLD SINS OVER AND OVER AND OVER AND OVER. WELL WE NEED TO QUIT SPENDING SO MUCH TIME CONFESSING THE SAME OLD SINS, AND WE NEED TO SPEND MORE TIME PRAYING FOR DELIVERANCE FROM THOSE SINS.

5. THAT IS WHY THE MODEL PRAYER THAT JESUS GIVES IS NOT A PRAYER FOR THE END OF THE DAY. IT IS A PRAYER FOR THE MORNING. IT IS TOO LATE TO COME TO GOD BEFORE BEDTIME AND ASK GOD TO DELIVER YOU FROM THE EVIL ONE. YOU NEED THAT PRAYER AT THE BEGINNING OF THE DAY. YOU DON'T NEED DAILY BREAD AT NIGHT. YOU NEED DAILY BREAD IN THE MORNING. I BELIEVE A PRAYER A DAY WOULD KEEP THE DEVIL AWAY, BUT THE DEVIL ALWAYS COMES FOR BREAKFAST. SO WE NEED TO MAKE SURE THAT WE PRAY AND SPEND TIME WITH THE LORD EARLY BEFORE THE DAY BEGINS THAT WE MIGHT HAVE HIM ALL THE DAY LONG.

VI. THE DELIGHT OF THE PRAYER

1. "FOR YOURS IS THE KINGDOM AND THE POWER AND THE GLORY FOREVER. AMEN." I LOVE THE WAY THIS PRAYER ENDS. IT ENDS ON A HALLELUJAH NOTE. DID YOU KNOW THAT THE REAL PURPOSE OF REAL PRAYER IS TO GIVE REAL PRAISE TO OUR HEAVENLY FATHER?

2. BILLY SUNDAY ONCE SAID, "WE NEED TO JERK SOME OF THE GROANS OUT OF OUR PRAYERS, AND SHOVE IN A FEW HALLELUJAHS." I SAY AMEN TO THAT!

3. ONE OF THE GREATEST PRAYER SECRETS I HAVE EVER LEARNED IS THE SECRET OF PRAISE. AS A MATTER OF FACT, I WANT TO TELL YOU SOMETHING. YOU WILL NEVER GET PAST KINDERGARTEN IN THE SCHOOL OF PRAYER UNTIL YOU LEARN HOW TO PRAISE THE LORD. BECAUSE PRAISE IS THE KEY THAT UNLOCKS THE DOOR OF PRAYER. PSALM 100 TELLS US “WE ENTER INTO HIS GATES WITH THANKSGIVING, AND INTO HIS COURTS WITH PRAISE.”

4. THERE IS NOTHING THAT CAN BIND SATAN AND LOOSEN THE POWER OF GOD IN YOUR LIFE LIKE PRAISE. YOU SEE, PRAYER IS NOT MEANT TO BE A DUTY. IT IS MEANT TO BE A DELIGHT. PRAYER WAS NEVER MEANT TO BE A BURDEN YOU ENDURE. IT WAS MEANT TO BE A BLESSING THAT YOU ENJOYED. THERE IS EVERY REASON IN THE WORLD WHY PRAYER SHOULD BE FILLED WITH PRAISE.

5. NOTICE FINALLY, HOW THE PRAYER BEGINS AND HOW IT ENDS. IT BEGINS “OUR FATHER,” AND ENDS “YOURS IS THE KINGDOM.” WE BEGIN BY PRAYING TO A FATHER. WE END BY PRAYING TO A KING. I HAVE A FATHER WHO WILL LISTEN TO ME ANY TIME I SPEAK, AND A KING WHO CAN GIVE ME ANYTHING I ASK. I HAVE THE SYMPATHY OF A FATHER AND THE SOVEREIGNTY OF A KING LISTENING TO MY PRAYER. WHY SHOULD NOT I PRAISE THE LORD?

6. AS I STUDY THIS PRAYER AND THINK ABOUT ALL IT IS AND ALL IT MEANS, THE CRY IN MY HEART IS THE CRY IN THE HEARTS OF THOSE DISCIPLES, “LORD, TEACH ME TO PRAY.”

MATTHEW 6:16-18

FACTS ABOUT FASTING

1. IT'S A STRANGE THING HOW WE ALLOW SOME SCRIPTURES TO INFLUENCE OUR LIVES BUT WE IGNORE OTHER SCRIPTURES. WE WILL FIND ONE SEED AND CULTIVATE IT AND FERTILIZE IT UNTIL IT BECOMES FRUIT IN OUR LIVES THEN WE WILL ALLOW OTHERS TO DIE ON THE VINE.
2. TWO THINGS HAVE HAPPENED HERE WITH THIS SCRIPTURE:
 - A. WE HAVE FORGOTTEN THIS PASSAGE.
 - B. WE HAVE FORSAKEN THE PRACTICE.
3. FASTING IS SOMETHING KNOW VERY LITTLE ABOUT. WE PRACTICE IT VERY LITTLE. KNOW A LOT ABOUT FEASTING BUT LITTLE ABOUT FASTING. SOMEONE HAS WELL SAID, "THE CHURCH HAS GONE FROM THE UPPER ROOM WITH ITS FIRE TO THE SUPPER ROOM WITH ITS SMOKE."

I. THE COMMENDATION OF FASTING - VERSE 16

NOTICE THE WORD "WHENEVER" NOT IF BUT WHEN YOU FAST JESUS SAID. JESUS ASSUMED THAT THE CHURCH WOULD FAST. HE NEVER DREAMED THAT THE CHURCH WOULD NOT FAST.

A. CHRIST PREDICTED IT.

1. TURN TO MATT. 9:14-15 "THEN THE DISCIPLES SAYING WHY OF JOHN CAME BUT YOUR DISCIPLES DO NOT FAST?" AND JESUS SAID TO THEM "AS LONG AS THE BRIDEGROOM IS WITH THEM, CAN THEY? THE DAYS WILL COME WHEN THE BRIDEGROOM IS TAKEN AWAY FROM THEM AND THEN THEY WILL FAST." JESUS SAID THAT THE LAST DAYS, THE DAYS OF THE SPIRIT WOULD BE A TIME FOR FASTING. FASTING IS A PART OF THE NEW WINE THAT CANNOT BE PUT INTO OLD CLOTHES. JESUS PREDICTED THAT HIS DISCIPLES WOULD FAST.

B. JESUS PRACTICED.

1. JESUS PRACTICED FASTING BEFORE HE MET SATAN IN THE GREAT TEMPTATION IN THE DESERT. IN MATT. 4:2 THE BIBLE SAYS THAT "HE HAD FASTED 40 DAYS AND 40 NIGHTS AND HE THEN BECAME HUNGRY." IT IS A VERY INTERESTING THING

TO NOTE HERE THAT JESUS FELT THAT ONE OF THE GREAT WEAPONS THAT COULD BE USED TO BATTLE SATAN AND TO BEAT SATAN ON HIS OWN TERMS WAS THE WEAPON OF FASTING.

2. JESUS FASTED BEFORE HE CHOSE HIS 12 DISCIPLES. IN LUKE 12 THE BIBLE SAYS THAT "AND IT WAS AT THIS TIME THAT HE WENT OFF TO THE MOUNTAIN TO PRAY AND HE SPENT THE WHOLE NIGHT IN PRAYER TO GOD." AND WHEN DAY CAME HE CALLED HIS DISCIPLES. ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT DECISIONS THAT JESUS EVER HAD TO FACE IN HIS MINISTRY WAS THE CALLING AND THE CHOOSING AND CONSECRATING OF 12 DISCIPLES SO JESUS NOT ONLY PREDICTED FASTING HE PRACTICED FASTING AND BY HIS PREDICTION AND BY HIS PRACTICE JESUS COMMENDED FASTING.

II. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF FASTING

THERE ARE SEVERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF TRUE FASTING WITHOUT WHICH IT BECOMES AN ABERRATION AND AN IMPROPER PRACTICE.

A. PROPRIETY

THERE MUST BE THE RIGHT MOTIVATION. IN FASTING THERE ARE THINGS ONE MUST AVOID.

1. EXHIBITIONISM

THIS IS MAKING A SHOW OF IT. JESUS SAID DON'T WALK AROUND WITH A BLACK ROBE ON, A BIBLE IN YOUR HAND, DANDRUFF IN YOUR HAIR LOOKING LIKE AN ACCIDENT TRYING TO FIND A PLACE TO HAPPEN. YOUR FASTING IS ONLY AS VALUABLE AS THE MOTIVE IN YOUR HEART. IT IS NOT THE WHAT, THE WHEN, OR THE WHERE BUT THE WHY OF FASTING THAT IS IMPORTANT. YOU SEE JESUS SAID THAT EXHIBITIONISM CAN ROB PRAYER, FASTING, SOUL WINNING, ANY CHRISTIAN WORK YOU DO IF YOU DO IT SIMPLY TO BE SEEN BY MEN AND TO GAIN A REPUTATION OF RIGHTEOUSNESS JESUS SAID IT ROBBED THE PRACTICE OF ANY REWARD OR ANY VALUE.

2. LEGALISM

FAST BECAUSE YOU WANT TO NOT BECAUSE YOU HAVE TO. YOU SEE THERE ARE SOME PEOPLE WHO MAKE FASTING A LEGALISTIC RITUAL THAT BECOMES NOTHING MORE THAN AN ORDINARY HABIT. JESUS SAID THAT THE PUBLICANS LOOKED UP TO GOD IN THE TEMPLE AND SAID, "I FAST TWICE A WEEK." PROBABLY FASTED AT THE SAME TIME, THE SAME DAY, THE SAME

STATION. HE HAD NO SPIRITUAL MOTIVATION IN MIND. IT WAS JUST SOMETHING HE DID AT A CERTAIN TIME JUST LIKE PEOPLE GET UP AT A CERTAIN TIME AND GO TO BED AT A CERTAIN TIME. THIS MAN FASTED AT A CERTAIN TIME. THERE IS NOTHING WRONG WITH HAVING A CERTAIN SET TIME FOR FASTING BUT IT MUST NOT BECOME A LEGALISTIC RITUAL.

3. RITUALISM

DON'T MAKE IT SOMETHING THAT YOU DO SIMPLY TO BE DOING IT. OR SOMETHING YOU DO AS A FORMAL PRACTICE. YOU SEE RITUALISM IS NOTHING MORE THAN "RITUALISM" AND A RITUAL IS NOTHING MORE THAN A GRAVE WITH BOTH ENDS KNOCKED OUT, SO YOU SHOULD NOT FAST FOR ANY OF THESE PRIOR MENTIONED REASONS. (HERE MUST BE A PROPER MOTIVATION.

B. PRIVACY

FASTING IS TO BE TOWARD GOD AND NOT MEN; IN FASTING YOU ARE SEEKING THE EAR OF GOD AND NOT THE EYES OF MEN, WHEN YOU FAST BY AND LARGE THE ONLY PERSON THAT OUGHT TO KNOW THAT YOU ARE FASTING IS YOU. THIS IS A PRIVATE MATTER BETWEEN YOU AND THE LORD. ONE HAS WELL SAID THAT WHAT A MAN IS HE IS IN THE DARK. SO IT IS THAT WE OUGHT TO FAST PRIVATELY.

C. PURPOSE

THERE MUST BE THE RIGHT PURPOSE. WHY ARE YOU FASTING? WHAT IS YOUR GOAL? AM THE GOAL OF FASTING OUGHT BE TO CONTEMPLATE GOD AND TO CONCENTRATE ON A SPIRITUAL MATTER .

1. IT IS OFTEN SO HARD TO CONCENTRATE ON SPIRITUAL MATTERS WHEN THE THINGS OF THE WORLD DISTRACT YOU. JUST AS TAKE A VACATION FROM THE WORLD TO "GET AWAY FROM THINGS." SOMETIMES YOU NEED TO FAST TO SPIRITUALLY GET AWAY FROM THE WORLD. AND YOU SEE HERE IS THE WAY THAT IT WORKS.

2. YOU FAST. YOU GET HUNGRY. NOW THAT HUNGER PAIN WOULD NORMALLY TELL YOU TO GET SOMETHING TO EAT. INSTEAD IT IS AN INSTRUMENT THAT GOD USES TO TELL YOU TO GET ON YOUR KNEES. YOU SEE FASTING PRIMARILY IS TO FOCUS YOUR

FAITH. IT IS TO TIE A STRING AROUND YOUR THROAT AND TO SENSITIZE YOUR HEART TO THE THINGS OF GOD.

3. THAT IS WHY FASTING AND PRAYER ALWAYS GO TOGETHER. FASTING IS FOR THE PURPOSE OF STRENGTHENING YOUR PRAYER LIFE AND SOBERING YOUR MIND. BY FASTING YOU ARE SAYING TO GOD, "LORD, THIS MATTER IS VERY SERIOUS TO ME AND TO SHOW YOU HOW SERIOUS IT IS TO ME AND HOW MUCH I WANT YOU TO DEAL WITH IT IN MY LIFE, I AM WILLING TO FOREGO FOOD."

D. THE PROCESS

NOW FASTING IS NORMALLY:

A. WITHOUT FOOD.

YOU NOTICE IN MATT. 4 THAT JESUS HUNGERED BUT HE DID NOT THIRST. HE PROBABLY DRANK WATER BUT HE FASTED FROM FOOD. AND NORMALLY FASTING IS

B. FROM 1 TO 3 DAYS.

NOW THERE ARE SOME EXCEPTIONS TO THIS. JESUS FASTED 40 DAYS AND MOSES DID ALSO. YOU CAN ALSO GO ON WHAT IS CALLED A TOTAL FAST. THAT IS A FAST THAT IS WITHOUT FOOD AND WITHOUT, WATER AND IN ACTS 9:9 THE BIBLE SAYS THAT PAUL WAS "3 DAYS WITHOUT SIGHT AND NEITHER ATE NOR DRANK." BUT PRIMARILY FASTING IS FASTING FROM FOOD TO CONCENTRATE ON PRAYER ABOUT A SPIRITUAL MATTER OR CERTAIN SPIRITUAL MATTERS THAT ARE DEAR AND NEAR TO YOUR HEART.

III. THE CONDITIONS OF FASTING

A. POSSIBLE CONDITIONS

1. To LOSE WEIGHT.

AND THERE ARE SOME OF YOU HERE WHO NEED TO LOSE WEIGHT. SOMEONE HAS WELL SAID, "WE LIVE OFF OF 1/2 OF WHAT WE EAT AND THE DOCTOR LIVES OFF THE OTHER 1/2." WE DIG OUR GRAVES WITH OUR FORKS. WE CLOG UP OUR VEINS WITH OUR FOOD. WE EAT UNTIL WE BLOAT AND WE DRINK UNTIL FLOAT. AND WE SHOULD DO NEITHER ONE OF THOSE THINGS. STING CAN BE TO

LOSE WEIGHT BUT THAT IS A POSSIBLE CONDITION AND NOT NECESSARILY A PROPER CONDITION.

2. SICKNESS OR DEPRESSION.

SOME PEOPLE FAST BECAUSE THEY DON'T FEEL LIKE EATING. SOME PEOPLE FAST BECAUSE THEY ARE DEPRESSED AND JUST DON'T WANT ANYTHING TO EAT AND AGAIN THESE MAY BE BIOLOGICAL OR PSYCHOLOGICAL REASONS FOR FASTING BUT THEY ARE NOT VERY GOOD BIBLICAL REASONS.

3. SOME FOLKS FAST FOR FINANCIAL REASONS. THEY GO WITHOUT MEALS AND TAKE THE MONEY THAT IT WOULD COST TO BUY THAT MEAL AND THEY USE THAT MONEY TO BUY SOMETHING. AGAIN YOU CAN DO THIS IF YOU DESIRE THERE IS NOTHING WRONG WITH IT. BUT IT IS NOT A BIBLICAL REASON FOR FASTING.

4. SOME PEOPLE FAST FOR SOCIAL REASONS. THEY TAKE THE MONEY THAT THEY WOULD NORMALLY SPEND AND THEY GIVE IT TO THE POOR. SOME PEOPLE FAST BECAUSE OF A HUNGER STRIKE, WE READ NOT LONG AGO OF THESE PRISONERS OVER IN IRELAND WITH THE IRISH REPUBLICAN ARMY WHO FASTED AND WENT ON A HUNGER STRIKE BECAUSE OF THE CONDITIONS IN THE PRISON AND ETC. WELL, AGAIN THESE ARE POSSIBLE CONDITIONS BUT THEY ARE NOT BIBLICAL REASONS.

B. PROPER CONDITIONS

1. WHENEVER THERE IS A GREAT WORK TO DO THE BIBLE SAYS THAT FASTING IS A VERY GOOD THING. IN NEHEMIAH 1:4 WHEN NEHEMIAH HAD HEARD THAT THE WALL OF JERUSALEM HAD BEEN TOTALLY DESTROYED AND THAT ITS GATES HAD BEEN BURNED WITH FIRE WE ARE TOLD THAT NEHEMIAH SAT DOWN AND WEPT AND MOURNED FOR DAYS AND BEGAN TO FAST AND PRAY BEFORE THE GOD OF HEAVEN. WHENEVER THERE IS A GREAT BURDEN THAT COMES TO YOUR HEART OR YOU KNOW THAT THERE IS A GREAT WORK THAT NEEDS TO BE DONE IT IS A VERY PROFITABLE THING AND A PROPER THING TO FAST AND TO PRAY.

2. WHENEVER THERE IS A GREAT DECISION TO BE MADE FASTING IS A GREAT SPIRITUAL AID AND HELP IN CLEANING THE MIND AND PREPARING THE HEART ACTS 13:1-3 THAT AND GODLY FIRST DECISION. THE BIBLE SAYS IN ACTS 13:1-3 THAT "THE FIRST MISSIONAIRES WHO WERE BARNABAS AND SAUL WERE CHOSEN BY

THE CHURCH AND ORDAINED BY THE CHURCH ONLY AFTER THEY HAD PRAYED AND FASTED." AND THIS WAS A VERY IMPORTANT DECISION FOR THE CHURCH TO MAKE BECAUSE THERE WERE THOSE WHO NEEDED TO GO TO THE GENTILES AND PREACH THE GOSPEL AND THERE WERE THOSE WHO NEEDED TO GO WHERE THE CHURCH COULD NOT GO AND TELL FOLKS ABOUT JESUS AND SO THIS WAS A VERY CRUCIAL DECISION IN THE LIFE OF THE EARLY CHURCH AND IT IS VERY INTERESTING. NOTE THAT THE ENTIRE CHURCH FASTED AND PRAYED AND THE ENTIRE CHURCH LAID THEIR HANDS ON THEM, ORDAINED THEM AND THEN SENT THEM ON TO WIN FOLKS TO JESUS. YOU SEE THEY COULD HAVE CHOSEN MANY MANY OTHERS TO HAVE GONE BECAUSE IN VERSE 1 IT TELLS US THAT THERE WERE MANY PROPHETS AND TEACHERS AT ANTIOCH. BARNABAS AND SIMEON AND LUCIUS AND MANAEN. OTHERS AND WE KNOW AS WE READ THE NARRATIVE OF ACTS THAT BARNABAS AND SAUL WERE THE TWO WHO NEEDED TO GO. THEY WERE GOD'S APPOINTED AND GOD'S ANNOINTED AND THEY WERE THE MEN WHO NEEDED TO GO. AND SO FASTING IS SOMETHING THAT IS PROPER WHENEVER YOU NEED TO MAKE A GREAT DECISION. IT WOULD BE A GREAT DAY IN THE LIFE OF MANY OF OUR YOUNG PEOPLE IF THEY BEGIN TO FAST AND PRAY BEFORE THEY MARRIED SOMEONE. IT WOULD BE A GREAT DAY IF CHURCHES WOULD BEGIN TO FAST AND PRAY BEFORE THEY DECIDED TO ORDAIN YOUNG MEN INTO THE GOSPEL MINISTRY. IT WOULD BE A GREAT DAY IF HUSBANDS AND WIVES WOULD BEGIN TO FAST AND PRAY BEFORE THEY MADE DECISIONS SUCH AS HOMES THEY WERE GOING TO BUY OR WHEN TO HAVE CHILDREN, HOW MANY CHILDREN TO HAVE HOW TO REAR THEIR CHILDREN. SO, WHENEVER THERE IS A GREAT DECISION TO MAKE, FASTING IS A PROPER TOOL THAT GOD USES AND GOD BLESSES.

3. WHENEVER THERE IS A GREAT PROBLEM TO SOLVE, THE BIBLE SAYS THAT ONE SHOULD PRAY AND FAST. THE BIBLE SAYS FOR EXAMPLE IN ISAIAH 58:6, "IS THIS NOT THE FAST WHICH I CHOSE TO LOOSEN THE BONDS OF WICKEDNESS TO UNDO THE BANDS OF THE YOKE AND TO LET THE OPPRESSED GO FREE AND BREAK EVERY YOKE." YOU SEE WE HAVE FAMILIES, LOVED ONES, FRIENDS, WHO ARE CAPTIVES AND NEED TO BE SET FREE. THERE ARE SOME OF YOU HERE WHO HAVE RELATIVES AND LOVED ONES WHO ARE LOST AND DO NOT KNOW JESUS. YOU NEED TO BE PRAYING AND FASTING OCCASIONALLY FOR THEM AND SEEKING GOD'S INTERVENTION IN THEIR LIVES. THERE ARE OTHERS OF YOU WHO HAVE RELATIVES WHO ARE MAYBE ALCOHOLICS OR WHO ARE DRUG ADDICTS OR WHO HAVE OTHER SIN IN THEIR LIFE AND SATAN NEEDS TO BE BOUND AND DEMONS NEED TO

BE REBUKED AND CLEANSED AND NOTHING CAN DO THIS LIKE PRAYER AND FASTING.

4. WHEN THERE IS A GREAT SIN TO REMOVE. ONE OF THE MOST BEAUTIFUL ILLUSTRATIONS OF THIS COMES IN THE BOOK OF JONAH 3:4 GOD TOLD JONAH TO GO PREACH TO AN ENTIRE CITY IN TYRE BY THE NAME OF NINEVEH AND HE TOLD JONAH THAT THE SIN THERE WAS SO GREAT AND THE PEOPLE HAD BECOME SO REBELLIOUS THAT UNLESS A REVIVAL OCCURED UNLESS THERE WAS A GREAT MOVEMENT OF THAT CITY TO GOD AND A GREAT MOVEMENT OF REPENTANCE AND FAITH THAT GOD WOULD DESTROY THE CITY. SO IN VERSE 4 THE BIBLE SAYS "THEN JONAH BEGIN TO GO THROUGH THE CITY ONE DAY'S WALK AND HE CRIED OUT AND SAID 'YET 40 DAYS AND NINEVEH WILL BE OVERTHROWN THEN THE PEOPLE OF NINEVEH BELIEVED IN GOD AND THEY CALLED A FAST AND PUT ON SACK CLOTH FROM THE GREATEST TO THE LEAST OF THEM." AND YOU KNOW THE REST OF THE STORY. THEY REPENTED, THEY TURNED BACK TOWARD GOD IN FAITH AND IN LOVE AND THE BIBLE SAID THAT NOT ONLY DID GOD SPARE THE CITY BUT HE BLESSED THE CITY. I WANT TO SAY TODAY THAT THE FATE OF AMERICA HANGS ON THE CHILDREN OF GOD NOT ON MISSILES, NOT ON THE MILITARY, NOT ON MONEY NOT ON MIGHT, NOT ON THE MASSES BUT ON THE CHILDREN OF GOD. WE NEED TO FAST. WE NEED TO PRAY FOR OUR COUNTRY. WE NEED TO FAST AND PRAY FOR OUR GOVERNMENT. WE NEED TO FAST AND PRAY FOR OUR RELIGIOUS LEADERS. WE NEED TO FAST AND PRAY FOR LOST PEOPLE. WE NEED TO FAST AND PRAY FOR MISSIONARIES. WE NEED TO FAST AND PRAY FOR THE CHURCH. WE NEED TO FAST AND PRAY FOR THE PREACHERS OF THE OF GOD. THOSE WHO ARE WILLING TO FAST, THOSE WHO ARE WILLING TO PRAY, THEY WILL BE THE SPARKS OF REVIVAL THEY WILL BE THE INSTRUMENTS OF REVIVAL AND THEY WILL STAND IN THE GAP BETWEEN A RIGHTEOUS GOD AND A SINFUL PEOPLE.

THESE ARE FACTS ABOUT FASTING AND GOD HELP US THAT WE WOULD EVEN BIND THE DEMON OF FOOD AND GLUTTON AND WE WOULD BEGIN TO LEARN AFRESH AND ANEW THE BEAUTIFUL DISCIPLINE OF FASTING AND PRAYER.

“DON’T WORRY, BE HAPPY”

INTRODUCTION

1. SOMETIMES IT IS CARVED INTO OUR BODIES BY SORES THAT WE CALL ***** SOMETIMES IT IS ETCHED INTO OUR FACES BY LINES THAT WE CALL WRINKLES. IT MAY BE PICTURED ON OUR LIPS BY THE SHAPE WE CALL A ***** IT CAN BE HEARD IN FOOTSTEPS ***** BACK AND FORTH ACROSS A FLOOR LATE AT NIGHT. SOMETIMES IT IS MUFFLED BY THE SILENCE OF SOMEONE LYING IN BED STARING AT THE CEILING WITHOUT BEING ABLE TO GO TO SLEEP.

2. IN MODERN JARGON IT IS CALLED ***** SOME PEOPLE CALL IT *****. JESUS CALLED IT *****.

3. WORRY IS A UNIVERSAL MALADY THAT IS IMPERVIOUS EITHER TO POSITION OR POSSESSIONS. HOW WOULD YOU LIKE TO BE YOUNG, SAY IN YOUR MID 30’ s, WEALTHY, MORE MONEY THAN YOU KNOW WHAT TO DO WITH, AND HAVE A GREAT POSITION, LIKE BEING THE CHAIRMAN OF A NATIONAL INSURANCE COMPANY. WELL, SUCH A MAN SAID THIS:

“I HAVE BEEN A CHRONIC WORRIER ALL MY LIFE. I’D SIT THERE AT MY DESK WORRYING ABOUT A PROBLEM IN MY BUSINESS, AND THEN I WOULD BEGIN TO WORRY ABOUT GOING BANKRUPT. THAT WOULD LEAD TO WORRYING ABOUT HOW I WAS GOING TO SUPPORT MYSELF, ABOUT WHAT I WOULD DO IN MY OLD AGE. IT WOULD JUST SPIRAL UP. IF I DIDN’T HAVE BUSINESS PROBLEMS I’D FIND SOMETHING ELSE TO WORRY ABOUT. I GUESS I WAS SPENDING HALF MY DAY WORRYING, AND HALF THE NIGHT TOO. I WAS LOSING SO MUCH SLEEP THAT I WAS TIRED ALL THE TIME, AND MY PRODUCTIVITY WAS FALLING OFF.”

4. HERE WAS A PERSON WHO YOU WOULD THINK WOULD BE FREE FROM WORRY, BUT INSTEAD WAS A SLAVE TO WORRY. ACCORDING TO A RECENT STUDY OF AMERICAN’S MENTAL HEALTH, WORRY IS ONE OF THE FEW EMOTIONAL PROBLEMS THAT ARE ON THE INCREASE IN THIS COUNTRY.

5. SOMEONE HAS SAID, “THINGS MAY CHANGE, BUT PEOPLE NEVER DO.” WORRY IS A PROOF OF THAT BECAUSE JESUS POINTED OUT THAT PEOPLE WORRIED ABOUT THE SAME THING IN HIS DAY, THAT PEOPLE WORRY ABOUT TODAY. PEOPLE WORRY AND THEY ***** . “DO NOT LAY UP FOR YOURSELVES TREASURES ON EARTH, WHERE MOTH AND RUST DESTROY AND WHERE THIEVES BREAK IN AND STEAL.” (V.19) SOME OF YOU HAVE LEARNED THE HARD WAY THAT IF YOUR OUTGO EXCEEDS YOUR INCOME, YOUR UPKEEP WILL BE YOUR DOWNFALL. YOU HAVE TOO MUCH MONTH LEFT AT THE END OF THE MONEY, AND YOU DO NOT KNOW WHAT TO DO.

6. THEN JESUS SAID SOME PEOPLE WORRY ABOUT FOOD. “THEREFORE I SAY TO YOU, DO NOT WORRY ABOUT YOUR LIFE, WHAT YOU WILL EAT OR WHAT YOU WILL DRINK; NOR ABOUT YOUR BODY, WHAT YOU WILL PUT ON. IS NOT LIFE MORE THAN FOOD AND THE BODY MORE THAN CLOTHING?” (v.25) LIKEWISE, THERE ARE PEOPLE TODAY WHO ARE WORRIED ABOUT WHERE THEIR NEXT MEAL MAY COME FROM. IN FACT, THERE ARE SOME PEOPLE WHO COULD DO WITHOUT A FEW MEALS, WHO EAT EVERY MEAL AS IF IT WERE THEIR LAST MEAL.

7. THEN THERE ARE THOSE WHO WORRY ABOUT THEIR FITNESS. “WHICH OF YOU BY WORRYING CAN ADD ONE CUBIT TO HIS STATURE?” (V.27) NOW I BELIEVE IN PHYSICAL FITNESS. I BELIEVE WE OUGHT TO KEEP OUR BODIES IN SHAPE. I BELIEVE WE OUGHT TO EAT A DISCIPLINED DIET. BUT GOD NEVER INTENDED FOR THE HUMAN BODY TO BECOME THE FETISH OF WORSHIP THAT IT HAS BECOME TODAY. SO MANY PEOPLE WILL TAKE TIME OUT OF A BUSY SCHEDULE TO GO TO A SPA FIVE OR SIX DAYS A WEEK, TO PUMP IRON, LIFT WEIGHT, RUN, AND SWIM, BECAUSE THEY ARE SO CONCERNED FOR THEIR BODIES, BUT THEY DON’T HAVE TIME EVEN TO GIVE GOD ONE DAY OF THE WEEK BECAUSE THEY HAVE NO CONCERN FOR THEIR SOULS.

8. THEN THERE ARE PEOPLE WHO ARE WORRIED ABOUT FASHION. “SO WHY DO YOU WORRY ABOUT CLOTHING? CONSIDER THE LILIES OF THE FIELD, HOW THEY GROW; THEY NEITHER TOIL NOR SPIN.” (V.28) WE ARE SO FASHION CONSCIOUS. WE WANT TO MAKE SURE THAT WE HAVE THE RIGHT LABELS, THE RIGHT NAME BRANDS, EVEN DOWN TO THE SHOES THAT WE WEAR. WE ARE BEING TOLD TODAY TO “PUMP UP” AND TO “AIR OUT.” (I FEEL LIKE SAYING, “SHUT UP” AND “GET OUT.”

9. THEN MANY PEOPLE ARE WORRIED ABOUT THE FUTURE. "THEREFORE DO NOT WORRY ABOUT TOMORROW, FOR TOMORROW WILL WORRY ABOUT ITS OWN THINGS. SUFFICIENT FOR THE DAY IS ITS OWN TROUBLE." (V.34) SOMEONE HAS WELL SAID THAT "WORRY IS THE INTEREST WE PAY IN ADVANCE TODAY FOR TROUBLE THAT MAY NEVER COME TOMORROW."

10. WELL THE LORD JESUS HAS A WORD FOR THE WORRIER, AND AN ANSWER FOR THE ANXIOUS.

I. THE SINFULNESS OF WORRY

1. NOW YOU MAY NOT THINK OF WORRY AS A SIN, BUT IT IS. IT MUST BE BECAUSE THREE TIMES IN THIS PASSAGE (VV 25, 31, & 34) JESUS COMMANDS US WITH THESE WORDS, "DO NOT WORRY." WORRY IS AN EXPRESSED DISOBEDIENCE OF A COMMAND OF THE LORD.

2. YOU SEE, WORRY IS NOT JUST A WEAKNESS. IT IS A WICKEDNESS. WORRY IS ONE OF THOSE "ACCEPTABLE" SINS IN THE CHRISTIAN LIFE. WE WOULD BE UPSET AT A CHRISTIAN WHO STAGGERED INTO HIS HOME DRUNK AND ABUSIVE. WE WOULD BE VERY UPSET ABOUT A FELLOW CHRISTIAN WHO STOLE SOMEONE ELSE'S CAR, OR WHO HAD AN AFFAIR WITH SOMEONE ELSE'S WIFE, OR WHO USED FILTHY AND VILE LANGUAGE. YET WE MAKE A JOKE ABOUT WORRY.

3. YET WORRY IS A SIN. IT IS AS MUCH OF A SIN AS IDOLATRY, AS ADULTERY, AS HYPOCRISY, AS PROFANITY. IN FACT, ONE GREAT PREACHER SAID, "I WOULD NO MORE WORRY THAN I WOULD CURSE AND USE PROFANE LANGUAGE."

4. NOW I AM ASHAMED TO SAY THAT SOME OF THE BIGGEST WORRYWARTS ARE GROWING ON CHRISTIANS. FAR TOO MANY CHRISTIANS HAVE TAKEN UP RESIDENCE IN "PANIC PALACE" AT THE CORNER OF "FRETFUL AVENUE" AND "WORRY-YOURSELF-SICK BOULEVARD." IT IS A SIN, IT IS A SLAP IN THE FACE OF GOD, TO WORRY.

5. WHAT YOU ARE SAYING WHEN YOU WORRY IS THIS: "GOD, YOU CAN'T BE TRUSTED HERE. YOU CANNOT HANDLE THIS SITUATION. YOUR WORD IS NOT TRUE HERE." THERE IS NOT A GREATER SIN IN THE BIBLE THAN THE SIN OF UNBELIEF.

II. THE SENSELESSNESS OF WORRY

1. TO BE REAL BLUNT, WORRY IS NOT ONLY SINFUL, WORRY IS JUST PLAIN STUPID. WORRY IS SENSELESS.

A. WORRY IS FOOLISH

1. "THEREFORE I SAY TO YOU, DO NOT WORRY ABOUT YOUR LIFE, WHAT YOU WILL EAT OR WHAT YOU WILL DRINK; NOR ABOUT YOUR BODY, WHAT YOU WILL PUT ON. IS NOT LIFE MORE THAN FOOD AND THE BODY MORE THAN CLOTHING? LOOK AT THE BIRDS OF THE AIR, FOR THEY NEITHER SOW NOR REAP NOR GATHER INTO BARN; YET YOUR HEAVENLY FATHER FEEDS THEM. ARE YOU NOT OF MORE VALUE THAN THEY?" (VV.25-26) JESUS TAKES THE FOUL OF THE AIR AND POINTS OUT JUST HOW FOOLISH WORRY IS. DID YOU KNOW THAT WHEN YOU WORRY YOU PUT YOURSELF ON THE LEVEL OF AN ANIMAL. AN ANIMAL ONLY HAS THREE CONCERNS IN LIFE. HE IS CONCERNED ABOUT SELF-PROPAGATION - REPRODUCING HIMSELF. HE IS CONCERNED ABOUT SELF-PRESERVATION - STAYING ALIVE. HE IS CONCERNED ABOUT SELF-GRATIFICATION - MAKING SURE HIS PHYSICAL NEEDS ARE MET. THAT IS ALL THE ANIMAL CARES ABOUT. HE HAS NO OTHER CONCERNS, NO OTHER CARES, NO OTHER WORRIES IN ALL THE WORLD.

2. WHEN A MAN WORRIES ABOUT THESE SAME THINGS, HE IS PUTTING HIMSELF ON THE LEVEL OF AN ANIMAL. WORRY IS LOOKING AT LIFE IN ONLY ONE DIMENSION, THE PHYSICAL DIMENSIONS. IT IS TO GO THROUGH LIFE MAKING SURE YOUR BARN IS FULL, EVEN THOUGH YOUR SOUL IS EMPTY.

3. BUT WORSE THAN THAT, WORRY PUTS YOU BELOW THE ANIMAL. BECAUSE WHEN YOU WORRY YOU DO SOMETHING THAT EVEN ANIMALS DO NOT DO. BIRDS DON'T WORRY. THEY SING, THEY CHIRP, THEY FLY, THEY BUILD NESTS, BUT THEY DON'T WORRY.

4. JESUS IS TEACHING US A LESSON FROM NATURE. THE LESSON IS THIS: IF GOD TAKES CARE OF THE BIRDS IN THE AIR, AND THE FLOWERS IN THE FIELD, DON'T YOU THINK HE WILL TAKE CARE OF YOU? RALPH WALDO EMERSON, THE GREAT POET, SAID, "ALL I HAVE SEEN TEACHES ME TO TRUST THE CREATOR FOR ALL I HAVE NOT SEEN."

SAID THE ROBIN TO THE SPARROW:

“I SHOULD REALLY LIKE TO KNOW
WHY THESE ANXIOUS HUMAN BEINGS
RUSH AROUND AND WORRY SO.”

SAID THE SPARROW TO THE ROBIN:

“I THINK SURELY IT MUST BE
THAT THEY HAVE NO HEAVENLY FATHER
SUCH AS CARES FOR YOU AND ME.”

5. WHAT FARMER WOULD FEED HIS CHICKENS, BUT WOULD NOT FEED HIS CHILDREN? WOULD GOD DARE TO FEED THE BIRDS, BUT NOT FEED HIS BELOVED? WORRY IS SENSELESS BECAUSE IT IS FOOLISH.

B. WORRY IS FRUITLESS

1. “WHICH OF YOU BY WORRYING CAN ADD ONE CUBIT TO HIS STATURE?” (V.27) WORRYING CANNOT ADD AN INCH TO YOUR HEIGHT OR A POUND TO YOUR WEIGHT. WORRYING NEVER SOLVED A PROBLEM, NEVER DRIED A TEAR, NEVER LIFTED A BURDEN, NEVER REMOVED AN OBSTACLE. IT NEVER MADE BAD THINGS GOOD, OR GOOD THINGS BETTER.

2. WORRY SIMPLY PULLS TOMORROW'S CLOUD OVER TODAY'S SUNSHINE. IT DOES NOT EMPTY TOMORROW OF ITS SORROW. IT ONLY EMPTIES TODAY OF ITS STRENGTH.

3. SOMEONE HAS OBSERVED THAT WORRYING IS LIKE SITTING IN A ROCKING CHAIR. IT WILL GIVE YOU SOMETHING TO DO, BUT IT WON'T GET YOU ANYWHERE.

4. YOU SEE, THERE ARE BASICALLY TWO THINGS THAT WE SHOULD NEVER WORRY ABOUT. YOU SHOULD NEVER WORRY ABOUT THOSE THINGS THAT YOU CAN CHANGE, AND YOU SHOULD NEVER WORRY ABOUT THOSE THINGS THAT YOU CAN'T CHANGE.

5. TAKE THINGS THAT YOU CAN CHANGE. WHY WORRY ABOUT SOMETHING YOU CAN CHANGE, JUST CHANGE IT. NOW TAKE THOSE THINGS THAT YOU CANNOT CHANGE. IF YOU CANNOT CHANGE THEM, WHY WORRY ABOUT THEM.

6. A UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN STUDY DETERMINED THAT 60% OF OUR WORRIES ARE UNWARRANTED; 20% HAVE ALREADY BECOME PAST ACTIVITIES AND ARE COMPLETELY OUT OF OUR CONTROL; 10

ARE SO PETTY THAT THEY DON'T MAKE ANY DIFFERENCE AT ALL. OF THE REMAINING 10% ONLY 4 TO 5% ARE REAL AND JUSTIFIABLE, AND OF THOSE WE CAN'T DO ANYTHING ABOUT HALF OF THEM. So ONLY 2% OF OUR WORRIES ARE REAL.

7. TO PUT IT ANOTHER WAY, 98% OF ALL OF YOUR WORRIES ARE ABSOLUTELY FRUITLESS. THAT IS WHY WORRY IS WASTING TODAY'S TIME TO CLUTTER UP TOMORROW'S OPPORTUNITIES WITH YESTERDAY'S TROUBLES.

8. MARK TWAIN ONCE SAID, “I AM AN OLD MAN AND HAVE KNOWN MANY TROUBLES, BUT MOST OF THEM NEVER HAPPENED.” YOU JUST THINK BACK RIGHT NOW AND LOOK LACK OVER YOUR PAST LIFE, AND YOU WILL HONESTLY FIND THAT MOST OF THE THINGS YOU LOST SLEEP OVER, FRETTE OVER, PACED THE FLOOR OVER, WORRIED OVER, EITHER (EVER HAPPENED OR TURNED OUT ALRIGHT.

9. A THIRD GRADE TEACHER WAS TRYING TO INSTRUCT HER CLASS ON HOW TO USE FRACTIONS. SHE SAID TO A LITTLE BOY ON THE FRONT ROW, “BILLY, WHAT IS $\frac{3}{4}$ 'S OF $\frac{5}{16}$ 'S?”

10. HE SAID, “I DON'T KNOW EXACTLY WHAT IT IS, BUT IT'S NOT ENOUGH TO WORRY ABOUT.” QUITE FRANKLY, THAT IS TRUE OF MOST WORRIES.

11. FOR EVERY EVIL UNDER THE SUN
EITHER THERE IS A CURE OR THERE IS NONE.
IF THERE BE ONE, SEEK TILL YOU FIND IT;
IF THERE BE NONE, NEVER MIND IT.

C. WORRY IS FAITHLESS

1. “NOW IF GOD SO CLOTHES THE GRASS OF THE FIELD, WHICH TODAY IS, AND TOMORROW IS THROWN INTO THE OVEN, WILL HE NOT MUCH MORE CLOTHE YOU, O YOU OF LITTLE FAITH?” (V.30) LET ME TELL YOU WHAT WORRY REALLY IS. WORRY IS SIMPLY THE OUTWARD EXPRESSION OF INWARD UNBELIEF. FAITH AND WORRY ARE MUTUALLY EXCLUSIVE. GEORGE TRUETT ONCE PREACHED A SERMON IN A SENTENCE. HE SAID, “WORRY IS A MILD FORM OF ATHEISM.” THAT IS TRUE.

2. WHEN YOU WORRY ABOUT A SITUATION YOU ARE TELLING GOD YOU DO NOT BELIEVE HIM. NOW YOU CAN BELIEVE IN GOD, BUT NOT BELIEVE GOD.

3. WHEN YOU WORRY YOU ARE SAYING ONE OF TWO THINGS: YOU ARE EITHER SAYING, "I DO NOT BELIEVE GOD CAN HANDLE THIS." OR, YOU ARE SAYING, "I BELIEVE GOD CAN HANDLE IT, BUT WON'T." NOW IN THE FIRST INSTANCE, YOU QUESTION THE COMPETENCE OF GOD. IN THE SECOND INSTANCE, YOU QUESTION THE CHARACTER OF GOD.

4. GEORGE MUELLER, ONE OF THE GREATEST MEN OF GOD WHO EVER LIVED, RIGHTLY SAID, "THE BEGINNING OF WORRY IS THE END OF FAITH. THE BEGINNING OF FAITH IS THE END OF WORRY."

5. YOU SEE, WORRY IS NOT JUST SINFUL, NOR IS IT JUST STUPID, WORRY IS SHAMEFUL. WORRY PUTS YOU ON THE SAME LEVEL AS AN UNBELIEVER. "THEREFORE DO NOT WORRY, SAYING, 'WHAT SHALL WE EAT?' OR 'WHAT SHALL WE DRINK?' OR 'WHAT SHALL WE WEAR?' FOR AFTER ALL THESE THINGS THE GENTILES SEEK. FOR YOUR HEAVENLY FATHER KNOWS THAT YOU NEED ALL THESE THINGS." (VV. 31-32)

6. THE WORD THERE FOR GENTILE REFERS TO A PAGAN, REFERS TO SOMEONE WHO IS AN UNBELIEVER. WHEN YOU WORRY YOU ACT JUST LIKE AN UNBELIEVER, YOU ACT JUST LIKE A PAGAN.

7. WORRY DENIES THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD. WORRY DENIES THE AUTHORITY OF GOD. WORRY DENIES THE INTEGRITY OF GOD.

III. THE SOLUTION TO WORRY

1. NOW THE SOLUTION TO WORRY IS FOUND IN A FAMILIAR THREE-WORD MOTTO, "FIRST THINGS FIRST." THIS IS EXACTLY WHAT JESUS SAID IN MATT. 6:33, "BUT SEEK FIRST THE KINGDOM OF GOD AND HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS, AND ALL THESE THINGS SHALL BE ADDED TO YOU. " THIS IS GOD'S WORD FOR WORRY, GOD'S ANSWER FOR THE ANXIOUS. PRACTICALLY EVERY WORD OF THIS VERSE IS RICH IN MEANING.

A. THERE IS A PRINCIPLE YOU MUST SEE

1. "SEEK FIRST THE KINGDOM OF GOD AND HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS." JESUS SAID THAT THE WAY TO STOP WORRYING IS

TO START SEEKING AFTER THE RIGHT THINGS. WE ARE TO PRIMARILY BE SEEKING GOD'S KINGDOM AND GOD'S RIGHTEOUSNESS.

2. FIRST OF ALL, WE ARE TO SEEK GOD'S RULE IN OUR LIVES. THAT IS WHAT THE WORD KINGDOM MEANS. A KINGDOM IS SIMPLY A PLACE WHERE A KING RULES. TO SEEK THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS TO SEEK THE RULE AND REIGN OF GOD OVER YOUR ENTIRE LIFE. THE ONLY FINAL AND FULL CURE FOR WORRY IS TO SUBMIT YOURSELF TOTALLY TO JESUS CHRIST AS LORD.

3. AS LONG AS YOU TRY TO RUN YOUR OWN LIFE, STEER YOUR OWN CAR, FLY YOUR OWN PLANE, PUSH YOUR OWN BUTTONS, MAKE YOUR OWN DECISIONS, YOU ARE GOING TO WORRY. IT IS ONLY WHEN YOU MAKE YOUR ONLY CONCERN HIS CONCERN, WHEN YOU SUBMIT YOUR WILL TO HIS WILL, THAT WORRY ENDS AND JOY BEGINS.

4. J. WILBUR CHAPMAN WAS A GREAT PREACHER OF YESTERYEAR. ONE TIME HE WENT TO LONDON AND HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO MEET GENERAL WILLIAM BOOTH WHO FOUNDED THE SALVATION ARMY.

5. THEY WERE SITTING IN HIS OFFICE AND DR. CHAPMAN ASKED GENERAL BOOTH THIS QUESTION: "WHAT HAS BEEN THE SECRET OF YOUR TREMENDOUS SUCCESS? HOW HAVE YOU MANAGED TO MAKE SUCH AN IMPACT AND AN INFLUENCE ON THIS WORLD?"

6. GENERAL BOOTH HESITATED FOR A SECOND, THE TEARS CAME INTO HIS EYES AND BEGAN TO FLOW DOWN HIS CHEEKS. HE SAID, "I WILL TELL YOU WHAT THE SECRET IS. GOD HAS HAD ALL THERE IS OF ME. THERE HAVE BEEN MEN WITH GREATER BRAINS THAN ME, MEN WITH GREATER OPPORTUNITIES, BUT FROM THE DAY I GOT THE POOR OF LONDON ON MY HEART, AND A VISION OF WHAT JESUS CHRIST COULD DO WITH THESE MEN, I MADE UP MY MIND THAT GOD WOULD HAVE ALL OF WILLIAM BOOTH THERE WAS IF THERE IS ANYTHING OF POWER IN THE SALVATION ARMY TODAY, IT IS BECAUSE GOD HAS ALL THE ADORATION OF MY HEART, ALL THE POWER OF MY WILL, AND ALL THE INFLUENCE OF MY LIFE."

7. DR. CHAPMAN SAID HE WENT AWAY FROM THAT MEETING WITH GENERAL BOOTH WITH ONE TRUTH BURNING IN HIS HEART, "THE GREATNESS OF A MAN'S POWER IS IN THE MEASURE OF HIS SURRENDER."

8. BUT FURTHERMORE, WE ARE TO BE SEEKING GOD'S RIGHTEOUSNESS WITHIN OUR LIVES. THAT IS, NOT ONLY SHOULD WE SEEK GOD'S CONTROL OVER US, BUT WE SHOULD ALSO SEEK GOD'S

CHARACTER WITHIN US. THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS NOT ONLY TO BE INWARDLY EXPERIENCED, IT IS TO BE OUTWARDLY EXPRESSED.

9. YOU SEE, IF GOD IS RULING OVER YOU THEN HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS WILL BE WITHIN YOU. BECAUSE A MAN'S CHARACTER IS SIMPLY THE OUTWARD EXPRESSION OF WHATEVER IS CONTROLLING HIM INWARDLY.

10. I DO NOT HESITATE TO SAY TO YOU THAT IF GOD IS NOT IN COMPLETE CONTROL IN EVERY AREA OF YOUR LIFE, YOU OUGHT TO BE WORRIED, YOU SHOULD BE WORRIED, YOU WILL BE WORRIED ABOUT A MATTER OF FACT, IF YOU ARE A CHILD OF GOD, GOD WILL WORRY YOU IN THOSE AREAS WHERE YOU ARE NOT TOTALLY SUBMISSIVE TO HIS LORDSHIP AND HIS LEADERSHIP.

B. THERE IS A PERSON YOU MUST SEEK

1. "SEEK FIRST THE KINGDOM OF GOD." GOD'S CONTROL OF YOUR LIFE IS NOT SOMETHING YOU PASSIVELY IS SOMETHING YOU ACTIVELY SEEK. IT IS SOMETHING YOU GO AFTER.

2. I CAN TELL YOU SOMETHING ABOUT YOUR RELATIONSHIP TO GOD AT THIS VERY MOMENT WITHOUT EVEN KNOWING YOU. I DO NOT KNOW HOW MUCH OF GOD YOU HAVE, BUT YOU HAVE ALL OF GOD THAT YOU WANT.

3. DR. VANCE HAVNER USED TO SAY THAT, "GOD DOES NOT HAVE FAVORITES, BUT HE DOES HAVE INTIMATES." YOU KNOW THE BIBLE SAYS IN JAMES 4:8, "DRAW NEAR TO GOD AND HE WILL DRAW NEAR TO YOU."

4. NOW YOU ARE AS CLOSE TO GOD TODAY AS YOU WANT TO BE. IF YOU DO NOT FEEL CLOSE TO GOD, IT IS NOT HIS FAULT.

5. I HEARD ABOUT A MAN AND HIS WIFE WHO HAD BEEN MARRIED FOR FIFTY YEARS, DRIVING DOWN THE ROAD IN HIS PICKUP TRUCK. HE WAS SITTING BEHIND THE STEERING WHEEL. SHE WAS SITTING ON THE PASSENGER'S SIDE. SHE LOOKED OVER AT HIM AND SAID, "YOU KNOW, WHEN WE FIRST STARTED DATING WE USED TO SIT RIGHT NEXT TO EACH OTHER." HE LOOKED AT HER AND SAID, "WELL, I AIN'T THE ONE THAT MOVED." IF YOU ARE NOT CLOSE TO GOD TODAY, HE IS NOT THE ONE THAT MOVED.

6. GOD HAS PROMISED IN HIS WORD, "YOU WILL SEEK ME AND FIND ME WHEN YOU SEARCH FOR ME WITH ALL OF YOUR HEART." (JERE. 29:13) AGAIN WE ARE REMINDED IN HEBREWS 11:6 THAT "HE IS A REWARDER OF THOSE WHO DILIGENTLY SEEK HIM."

C. THERE IS A PRIORITY YOU MUST SET

1. "SEEK FIRST THE KINGDOM OF GOD." IF YOU ARE GOING TO WIN THE WAR OVER WORRY, GOD MUST COME FIRST. YOU SEE, JESUS DOES NOT WANT A PLACE IN YOUR LIFE. JESUS DOES NOT EVEN WANT PROMINENCE IN YOUR LIFE. JESUS WANTS PREEMINENCE IN YOUR LIFE.

2. JESUS WANTS THE FIRST MOMENTS OF EVERY MORNING WHEN YOU GET OUT OF BED. JESUS WANTS THE FIRST DAY OF EVERY WEEK. JESUS WANTS THE FIRST FRUITS OF YOUR INCOME. HE WANTS TO BE FIRST.

3. THE LORD JESUS IS NOT INTERESTED IN BEING THE FIRST RUNNER-UP IN YOUR BEAUTY CONTEST. HE IS NOT INTERESTED IN BEING VICE PRESIDENT IN YOUR CORPORATION. HE IS NOT INTERESTED IN BEING SECOND IN COMMAND IN YOUR ARMY. JESUS WANTS TO BE THE KING ON THE THRONE, NOT A CO-PARTNER IN A DUPLEX.

4. NOW IF YOU WANT TO KNOW WHERE YOUR PRIORITIES ARE (AND NOT WHERE YOU SAY THEY ARE) LET ME ASK YOU THREE QUESTIONS. FIRST OF ALL, WHAT ARE YOUR ANXIETIES? BECAUSE AN ANXIETY IS A PRIORITY. WHAT ARE YOU WORRIED MOST ABOUT? WHAT ARE YOU CONCERNED MOST ABOUT? WE WORRY ABOUT THOSE THINGS THAT ARE MOST IMPORTANT TO US. WHATEVER IS MOST IMPORTANT TO US IS A PRIORITY. SO WHAT ARE YOUR WORRIES - FOOD, FASHION, FITNESS, FINANCE, FUTURE, FAMILY? WHATEVER YOUR WORRIES ARE, THOSE ARE YOUR PRIORITIES.

5. MY SECOND QUESTION IS, WHAT ARE YOUR ACTIVITIES? YOU SHOW ME HOW YOU SPEND YOUR TIME, I'LL SHOW YOU WHAT YOUR PRIORITIES ARE. WE FIND THE TIME TO DO WHAT WE REALLY WANT TO DO.

6. THEN WHAT ARE YOUR AMBITIONS? WHAT REALLY LIGHTS YOUR FIRE? WHAT REALLY TURNS YOUR MOTOR? WHAT GIVES YOU THE DRIVE THAT YOU HAVE IN YOUR LIFE? WHATEVER IT IS, WHETHER IT IS TO BE THE PRESIDENT OF YOUR COMPANY, TO BE FINANCIALLY INDEPENDENT, TO LIVE IN A MANSION, TO DRIVE A NICE CAR, THAT IS YOUR PRIORITY.

7. YOU SEE, THE KEY TO OVERCOMING WORRY IS PROPER PRIORITIES. WORRY IS SIMPLY THE SYMPTOM OF THE DISEASE OF MISPLACED PRIORITIES. IF YOU WANT TO OVERCOME WORRY YOU MAKE THE FIRST AND OVERRIDING PRIORITY OF YOUR LIFE TO FIND AND TO DO THE WILL OF GOD.

D. THERE IS A PROMISE YOU MUST SEIZE

1. "AND ALL THESE THINGS SHALL BE ADDED UNTO YOU." NOW THAT IS A BLANK CHECK STATEMENT. JESUS SAID, "IF YOU WILL PUT ME FIRST, I WILL TAKE CARE OF EVERYTHING ELSE - YOUR FOOD, YOUR FASHION, YOUR FINANCES, YOUR FITNESS, YOUR FUTURE."

2. DAVID SAID IN PSALM 37:25, "I HAVE BEEN YOUNG, AND NOW AM OLD; YET I HAVE NOT SEEN THE RIGHTEOUS FORSAKEN, NOR HIS DESCENDANTS BEGGING BREAD." NOW WHO ARE THE RIGHTEOUS? THE RIGHTEOUS ARE THOSE WHO SEEK FIRST THE KINGDOM OF GOD AND HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS.

3. THE SCENE IS A VERY DRAMATIC SCENE. IT'S THE CLASSIC GAME OF ALL FOOTBALL - THE ROSE BOWL. TWO UNDEFEATED TEAMS, GEORGIA TECH AND THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, ARE PLAYING FOR THE NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP.

4. TWO QUARTERS ARE ALMOST GONE, AND IT'S A DEADLOCKED CONTEST.

5. THE BALL IS ON THE GEORGIA TECH 33 YARD LINE. CALIFORNIA'S PRESSING HARD FOR A TOUCHDOWN. BUT SUDDENLY THERE'S A PILEUP IN THE MIDDLE OF THE LINE, THERE'S A FUMBLE. THE BALL GETS LOOSE, AND THE BIG CENTER FROM CALIFORNIA SCOOPS IT UP. HE'S HIT THIS WAY, HE WHIRLS AROUND. HE'S HIT THAT WAY, HE WHIRLS AROUND. ALL OF A SUDDEN HE SEES NOTHING IN FRONT OF HIM BUT DAYLIGHT AND OPEN FIELD. WELL, THE CENTER DOESN'T GET TO RUN WITH THE FOOTBALL VERY OFTEN AND SO HE BEGAN TO PUMP THOSE LEGS AND ARMS FOR ALL HE WAS WORTH. HE STARTS TO RUN AS HE'S NEVER RUN BEFORE.

6. THE CROWD GOES WILD. PANDEMONIUM HAS BROKEN LOOSE. HE THINKS IT'S BECAUSE HE'S RUNNING FOR A TOUCHDOWN. BUT WHAT HE FAILS TO REALIZE IS, HE'S RUNNING THE WRONG WAY. HE'S RUNNING FOR THE WRONG GOAL.

7. GEORGIA TECH IS EVEN CALLING FOR INTERFERENCE TO HELP HIM, AND HIS OWN TEAMMATES ARE TRYING TO TACKLE HIM

AND BRING HIM DOWN. HE THINKS THEY ARE BEING SELFISH THAT THEY ARE TRYING TO SCORE THE TOUCHDOWN. FINALLY, AT THE ONE YARD LINE, ROY RIEGEL IS BROUGHT DOWN.

8. YOU CANNOT IMAGINE THE HUMILIATION AS HE WALKS BACK TO HIS BENCH AMONG THE BOOS, AND THE JEERS, AND THE CHEERS OF THE CROWD. FOR THE REST OF HIS CAREER HE WAS KNOWN AS "WRONG-WAY ROY." CAN YOU THINK OF ANYTHING MUCH MORE HUMILIATING THAN TO BE PLAYING IN A GAME AND GETTING THE GOALS CONFUSED.

9. THERE ARE SO MANY PEOPLE WHO ARE HUSTLING AND BUSTLING TRYING TO MAKE AS MUCH MONEY AS THEY CAN, TRYING TO BUILD AS BIG A HOME AS THEY CAN, TRYING TO DRIVE AS NICE A CAR AS THEY CAN, TRYING TO WEAR AS NICE CLOTHES AS THEY CAN. ALL THE TIME GOD IS LOOKING DOWN FROM HEAVEN SAYING, "YOU ARE HEADED TOWARD THE WRONG GOAL."

10. THE BIBLE SAYS THERE ARE REALLY ONLY TWO THINGS YOU OUGHT TO BE WORRIED ABOUT: DEATH AND JUDGMENT. ONE OF THESE DAYS YOU ARE GOING TO DIE, AND YOU'RE GOING TO MEET GOD. NOW IF YOU KNOW JESUS YOU ARE A FOOL IF THAT WORRIES YOU. BUT IF YOU DO NOT KNOW JESUS YOU ARE A FOOL IF IT DOESN'T.

11. BUT IF YOU WILL COMMIT YOUR LIFE TO THE LORD JESUS CHRIST YOU CAN TURN YOUR WORRY INTO WORSHIP, YOUR CARES INTO PRAYERS, AND YOU CAN LITERALLY AND ETERNALLY LIVE HAPPILY EVER AFTER.

**“HOW TO MAKE THE REST OF YOUR LIFE
THE BEST OF YOUR LIFE”**

INTRODUCTION

1. THERE IS AN OLD SAYING THAT, “YOU ARE NEVER TOO OLD TO LEARN.” HERE IS ONE LESSON THAT YOU’RE NEVER TOO OLD TO LEARN: “SO TEACH US TO NUMBER OUR DAYS, THAT WE MAY GAIN A HEART OF WISDOM.” (PSA. 90:12) NOW I LIKE THE WAY LIVING BIBLE TRANSLATES THIS VERSE. “TEACH US TO NUMBER OUR DAYS AND RECOGNIZE HOW FEW THEY ARE; HELP US TO SPEND THEM AS WE SHOULD.”
2. SOMEONE HAS OBSERVED THAT LIFE IS LIKE A DOLLAR BILL. YOU CAN SPEND IT ANY WAY YOU WANT TO, BUT YOU CAN ONLY SPEND IT ONCE.
3. NOW WHEN YOU SPEND MONEY THERE ARE REALLY ONLY ONE OF TWO WAYS YOU CAN SPEND IT. YOU CAN WASTE IT, OR YOU CAN INVEST IT. THE SAME THING IS TRUE WITH LIFE.
4. NOW WHETHER YOU ARE YOUNG OR OLD, SIX OR SIXTY, HEALTHY AND WEALTHY, OR PUNY AND POOR, YOU CAN MAKE THE REST OF YOUR LIFE THE BEST OF YOUR LIFE.
5. SUPPOSE YOU WERE STARTING LIFE ALL OVER. YOU ARE OLD ENOUGH TO KNOW RIGHT FROM WRONG. YOU ARE OLD ENOUGH TO LEARN, OLD ENOUGH TO LOVE, OLD ENOUGH TO REALLY LIVE. IF YOU COULD ASK THE LORD JESUS CHRIST HOW TO MAKE THE REST OF YOUR LIFE THE BEST OF YOUR LIFE, WHAT DO YOU THINK HE WOULD SAY? I DON’T THINK WE HAVE TO WONDER, I THINK I KNOW.
6. “BUT SEEK FIRST THE KINGDOM OF GOD AND HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS, AND ALL THESE THINGS SHALL BE ADDED TO YOU.” (MT. 6:33) I THINK YOU CAN SUMMARIZE WHAT JESUS SAID HERE IN THREE WORDS: “FIRST THINGS FIRST.” NOW I KNOW THAT SOUNDS SIMPLE, BUT I WANT TO TELL YOU THAT IF YOU, BEGINNING TODAY, WOULD CONSCIOUSLY, CONTINUOUSLY, CONSTANTLY, AND CONSISTENTLY PUT FIRST THINGS FIRST, IT WOULD ABSOLUTELY TRANSFORM YOUR LIFE. THE FORMULA FOR HOW TO DO JUST THAT IS FOUND IN THIS TREMENDOUS STATEMENT FROM THE LIPS OF OUR LORD.

I. SET PROPER PRIORITIES

1. NOW EVERYTHING RISES AND FALLS RIGHT HERE. IF YOUR PRIORITIES ARE NOT IN ORDER, YOUR LIFE WILL NOT BE IN ORDER. IF YOUR PRIORITIES ARE NOT RIGHT, YOU WON’T BE RIGHT.
2. NOW YOU DON’T HAVE TO PRAY ABOUT WHAT YOUR NUMBER ONE PRIORITY IN LIFE OUGHT TO BE. YOU DON’T HAVE TO THINK ABOUT IT. YOU DON’T HAVE TO DISCUSS IT. YOU DON’T HAVE TO LOOK FOR IT. YOU JUST HAVE TO DO IT. BECAUSE JESUS HAS ALREADY TOLD US WHAT OUR FIRST PRIORITY OUGHT TO BE, “SEEK FIRST THE KINGDOM OF GOD.”
3. THE WORD SEEK MEANS TO “ACTIVELY PURSUE” OR “TO GO AFTER.” IT’S IN THE PRESENT TENSE. IT MEANS CONTINUOUSLY. EVERY DAY OF YOUR LIFE YOU OUGHT TO SEEK FIRST THE KINGDOM OF GOD.
4. NOW IN ORDER TO SEEK THE KINGDOM, YOU MUST FIRST SEEK THE KING. BECAUSE YOU CANNOT HAVE A KINGDOM WITHOUT A KING. THE FIRST PRIORITY OF YOUR LIFE OUGHT TO BE TO SEEK THE KING OF THE KINGDOM.
5. DID YOU KNOW THAT THE CHRISTIAN LIFE IS MORE THAN JUST EXCEPTING THE LORD. IT IS SEEKING THE LORD. THE LORD IS NOT JUST SOMEONE YOU PASSIVELY ACCEPT. HE IS SOMEONE YOU ACTIVELY SEEK. I CAN TELL YOU SOMETHING ABOUT YOUR RELATIONSHIP TO GOD AT THIS VERY MOMENT WITHOUT EVEN KNOWING YOU. I CAN TELL YOU HOW MUCH OF GOD YOU HAVE - YOU HAVE ALL OF GOD THAT YOU WANT.
6. GOD DOES NOT HAVE ANY FAVORITES, BUT HE DOES HAVE INTIMATES. JAMES 4:8 SAYS, “YOU DRAW NEAR TO GOD AND HE WILL DRAW NEAR TO YOU.” GOD HAS PROMISED IN HIS WORD, “YOU WILL SEEK ME AND FIND ME, WHEN YOU SEARCH FOR ME WITH ALL OF YOUR HEART.” (JERE. 29:13)

7. BUT IT IS NOT ENOUGH TO SEEK THE LORD. YOU MUST SEEK HIM FIRST. JESUS SAID, "SEEK FIRST THE KINGDOM OF GOD." FIRST THINGS FIRST MEANS PUTTING THE FATHER FIRST. THERE ARE THREE WORDS I WANT YOU TO CIRCLE IN THIS PASSAGE. IN V.30 CIRCLE THE WORD FAITH. IN V.32 CIRCLE THE WORD FATHER. IN V.33 CIRCLE THE WORD FIRST. YOU KNOW THE BIBLE SAYS IN HEB. 11:6, "WITHOUT FAITH IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO PLEASE GOD." DO YOU KNOW WHAT FAITH IS? FAITH IS PUTTING THE FATHER FIRST.

8. LET ME TELL YOU SOMETHING. JESUS DOES NOT WANT A PLACE IN YOUR LIFE. JESUS DOES NOT EVEN WANT PROMINENCE IN YOUR LIFE. JESUS WANTS PREEMINENCE IN YOUR LIFE.

9. JESUS WANTS THE FIRST MOMENTS OF EVERYDAY. JESUS WANTS THE FIRST DAY OF EVERY WEEK. JESUS WANTS THE FIRST PART OF EVERY PAYCHECK. HE WANTS TO BE FIRST.

10. THE LORD JESUS CHRIST IS NOT INTERESTED IN BEING THE FIRST RUNNER-UP IN YOUR BEAUTY CONTEST. HE IS NOT INTERESTED IN BEING VICE-PRESIDENT IN YOUR CORPORATION. HE IS NOT INTERESTED IN BEING SECOND IN COMMAND IN YOUR ARMY. HE WANTS TO BE THE KING ON THE THRONE OF YOUR HEART, NOT A CO-PARTNER IN A DUPLEX.

11. BUT NOT ONLY ARE WE TO SEEK THE KING, WE OUGHT TO SEEK THE KINGDOM. THE KINGDOM OF GOD OUGHT TO BE THE OBSESSION OF YOUR LIFE. THE WORD KINGDOM THERE LITERALLY MEANS RULE OR REIGN. A KINGDOM IS A PLACE WHERE A KING RULES. TO SEEK THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS TO SEEK THE RULE AND THE REIGN OF GOD OVER YOUR ENTIRE LIFE.

12. NOW WHEN YOU TRULY SEEK A KING, AND YOU TRULY SEEK HIS KINGDOM, YOU ARE AUTOMATICALLY SEEKING FOR THREE THINGS. FIRST OF ALL, YOU ARE SEEKING FOR THE GLORY OF THE KING. EVERY PART AND PARCEL OF YOUR LIFE, EVERY MINUTE AND MOMENT OF YOUR TIME, EVERY OUNCE AND POUND OF YOUR STRENGTH, EVERY MUSCLE AND FIBRE OF YOUR BODY OUGHT TO BE GIVEN FOR THE GLORY OF GOD. "THEREFORE, WHETHER YOU EAT OR DRINK, OR WHATEVER YOU DO, DO ALL TO THE GLORY OF GOD." (1 COR. 10:31)

13. BUT IT MEANS ALSO TO SEEK FOR THE GUIDANCE OF THE KING. A LOYAL SUBJECT ALWAYS WANTS TO DO WHATEVER THE KING WOULD HAVE HIM TO DO. THERE IS NO HIGHER CALLING IN LIFE

THAN TO FIND OUT WHAT YOUR KING WANTS DONE AND THEN TO DO IT. EVERY MORNING OF YOUR LIFE YOU OUGHT TO BEGIN BY ASKING THE LORD JESUS WHAT PAUL ASKED THE LORD JESUS ON THAT DAMASCUS ROAD, WHEN HE SAID, "LORD, WHAT WOULD YOU HAVE ME TO DO?"

14. BUT IT ALSO MEANS TO SEEK THE GOVERNMENT OF THE KING. A LOYAL SUBJECT DESIRES TO BE CONTROLLED BY THE KING, TO BE GOVERNED BY THE KING, TO BE RULED BY THE KING. SOMEONE MIGHT SAY, "WHY YOU ARE TALKING ABOUT SLAVERY." MAY I TELL YOU, THAT THE GREATEST LIBERTY IN THE WORLD IS FOUND IN BEING CONTROLLED BY THE RIGHT MASTER.

15. HAS IT EVER OCCURRED TO YOU THAT IF YOUR WILL WAS THAT GOD'S WILL WOULD ALWAYS BE DONE IN YOUR LIFE, THEN YOUR WILL WOULD ALWAYS BE DONE.

16. I HEARD ABOUT A WOMAN WHO WAS DEATHLY SICK. A NEIGHBOR CAME TO VISIT HER AND HE ASKED HER WHETHER SHE WANTED TO LIVE OR TO DIE. SHE SAID, "I JUST WANT WHATEVER PLEASURES GOD."

17. THE NEIGHBOR SAID, "WELL, WHAT IF GOD WERE TO REFER THE MATTER TO YOU, WHICH WOULD YOU CHOOSE?"

18. SHE SAID, "IF GOD WERE TO REFER THE MATTER TO ME, I WOULD JUST REFER THE MATTER BACK TO HIM." THAT LADY HAD HER PRIORITIES IN THE RIGHT ORDER.

19. YOU CAN BELIEVE THIS OR NOT, BUT IT WOULD BE BETTER TO DIE IN THE WILL OF GOD THAN TO LIVE OUTSIDE OF THE WILL OF GOD.

II. SEEK PERSONAL PURITY

1. NOT ONLY ARE WE TO SEEK HIS KINGDOM, WE ARE TO SEEK "HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS." THAT IS, NOT ONLY ARE WE TO BE SEEKING GOD'S CONTROL OVER US, BUT WE ARE ALSO TO BE SEEKING GOD'S CHARACTER WITHIN US. THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS NOT ONLY TO BE INWARDLY EXPERIENCED. IT IS TO BE OUTWARDLY EXPRESSED.

2. YOU SEE, IF GOD IS RULING OVER YOU, THEN HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS WILL BE WITHIN YOU. BECAUSE A MAN'S CHARACTER IS SIMPLY THE OUTWARD EXPRESSION OF WHATEVER IS CONTROLLING HIM INWARDLY. FAITH IS ALWAYS SEEN BY ITS FRUIT. CHARACTER IS ALWAYS SEEN BY ITS CONDUCT. PROVERBS 20:12 TELLS US, "THE HEARING EAR AND THE SEEING EYE, THE LORD HAS MADE BOTH OF THEM." YOU SEE, AS WE SEEK THE KINGDOM OF GOD, PEOPLE OUGHT TO BE ABLE TO SEE THE KINGDOM IN US.

3. WE ARE NEVER GOING TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN THIS WORLD UNTIL THE WORLD SEES A DIFFERENCE IN US. NIETZSCHE, THE GERMAN PHILOSOPHER, WAS THE PHILOSOPHICAL FOUNDER OF THE NAZI MOVEMENT IN GERMANY. HE WAS THE FIRST MAN IN HISTORY TO COME TO THE CONCLUSION THAT "GOD IS DEAD." HE CAME TO THAT CONCLUSION BY LOOKING AT CHRISTIANITY. DO YOU KNOW WHAT HE SAID ABOUT CHRISTIANS? HE SAID, "IF YOU WANT ME TO BELIEVE IN YOUR REDEEMER, YOU ARE GOING TO HAVE TO LOOK A LITTLE MORE REDEEMED."

4. THE REAL MARK OF A CHRISTIAN IS THAT HE MAKES IT EASIER FOR OTHERS TO BELIEVE IN GOD. NOW WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO SEEK THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD?

A. WE MUST DESIRE IT

1. WE DO WHAT WE REALLY WANT TO DO, AND WE ARE WHAT WE REALLY WANT TO BE. JESUS SAID IN MATT. 5:6, "BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO HUNGER AND THIRST FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS, FOR THEY SHALL BE FILLED."

2. YOU OUGHT TO DESIRE TO BE RIGHT, TO DO RIGHT, TO LIVE RIGHT, JUST AS MUCH AS A HUNGRY MAN DESIRES FOOD, AND A THIRSTY MAN DESIRES WATER.

B. WE MUST DERIVE IT

1. WE ARE TO SEEK "HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS." GOD IS NOT INTERESTED IN YOUR RIGHTEOUSNESS. HE IS ONLY INTERESTED IN HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS. GOD IS NOT INTERESTED IN WHAT YOU CAN DO FOR HIM. HE IS INTERESTED IN WHAT HE CAN DO THROUGH YOU.

2. IT WILL BE A GREAT DAY WHEN YOU LEARN THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN SELF RIGHTEOUSNESS AND THE SAVIORS RIGHTEOUSNESS. PAUL, AFTER HE WAS SAVED, MADE THIS ONE OF THE GOALS OF HIS LIFE. HE SAID IN PHIL. 3:9 THAT HE WANTED TO "BE FOUND IN HIM, NOT HAVING MY OWN RIGHTEOUSNESS, WHICH IS FROM THE LAW, BUT THAT WHICH IS THROUGH FAITH IN CHRIST, THE RIGHTEOUSNESS WHICH IS FROM GOD BY FAITH."

3. NOW I WANT YOU TO LEARN A LESSON ABOUT RIGHTEOUSNESS. RIGHTEOUSNESS MUST BE IMPUTED BEFORE IT CAN BE IMPARTED. LET ME MAKE IT MORE SIMPLE. BEFORE YOU CAN LIVE IT, GOD MUST GIVE IT. THAT IS EXACTLY WHY JESUS CAME AND JESUS DIED, THAT WE MIGHT HAVE THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD. "FOR HE MADE HIM WHO KNEW NO SIN TO BE SIN FOR US, THAT WE MIGHT BECOME THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD IN HIM." (II COR. 5:21)

C. WE MUST DEPICT IT

1. WE OUGHT TO LIVE LIKE KINGDOM SUBJECTS. WILL ROGERS SAID, "WE OUGHT TO LIVE IN SUCH A WAY THAT WE WOULD NOT BE ASHAMED TO SELL THE FAMILY PARROT TO THE TOWN GOSSIP."

III. SEE PROMISED PROSPERITY

1. NOW THE LORD SAYS THAT IF YOU WILL SEEK HIS KINGDOM AND HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS, "ALL THESE THINGS SHALL BE ADDED UNTO YOU." NOW WHAT "THINGS" WAS THE LORD REFERRING TO? HE WAS TALKING ABOUT ALL THE THINGS THAT PEOPLE WORRY ABOUT. IN V.19 WE ARE TOLD THAT PEOPLE WORRY ABOUT FINANCES. "DO NOT LAY UP FOR YOURSELVES TREASURES ON EARTH, WHERE MOTH AND RUST DESTROY AND WHERE THIEVES BREAK IN AND STEAL."

2. IN V.25 WE ARE TOLD THAT PEOPLE WORRY ABOUT FOOD. "THEREFORE I SAY TO YOU, 'DO NOT WORRY ABOUT YOUR LIFE, WHAT YOU WILL EAT OR WHAT YOU WILL DRINK; NOR ABOUT YOUR BODY, WHAT YOU WILL PUT ON. IS NOT LIFE MORE THAN FOOD AND THE BODY MORE THAN CLOTHING?'"

3. IN V.27 WE ARE TOLD THAT PEOPLE WORRY ABOUT FITNESS. "WHICH OF YOU BY WORRYING CAN ADD ONE CUBIT TO HIS STATURE?"

4. IN V.28 WE ARE TOLD THAT PEOPLE WORRY ABOUT FASHION.
“SO WHY DO YOU WORRY ABOUT CLOTHING? CONSIDER THE LIVES OF THE
FIELD, HOW THEY GROW: THEY NEITHER TOIL NOR SPIN.”

5. NOW ALL OF THESE ARE THINGS THAT WE NEED. THAT’S
WHY THE LORD SAID IN V.32, “FOR AFTER ALL THESE THINGS THE
GENTILES SEEK. FOR YOUR HEAVENLY FATHER KNOWS THAT YOU
NEED ALL THESE THINGS.” NOW THE LORD HAS PROMISED THAT IF YOU
WILL SEEK FIRST HIS KINGDOM AND HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS, YOU WILL HAVE
ALL THE THINGS YOU NEED. NOW I DID NOT SAY YOU WOULD HAVE
NECESSARILY THE THINGS THAT YOU WANT.

6. I AM CONVINCED THERE ARE FOUR LESSONS PARENTS
OUGHT TO TEACH THEIR CHILDREN EARLY, AND THAT IT WOULD BE
GOOD FOR EVEN SOME ADULTS TO RE-LEARN. FIRST OF ALL, YOU
DON’T NEED EVERYTHING YOU WANT. I WISH I HAD ALL THE MONEY
BACK THAT I HAD SPENT IN MY LIFE ON THINGS THAT I WANTED THAT I DIDN’T
REALLY NEED.

7. THE SECOND LESSON IS, YOU DON’T WANT EVERYTHING YOU
NEED.

8. THE THIRD LESSON IS, GOD DOESN’T GIVE US EVERYTHING WE
WANT. I, FOR ONE, AM SO GLAD THAT HE DOESN’T. YOU KNOW, ONE OF
THE GREATEST BLESSINGS OF GOD IS FOUND IN THOSE THINGS THAT HE
DOESN’T GIVE US. I READ ONE TIME THE CONFESSION OF AN UNKNOWN
CONFEDERATE SOLDIER THAT TREMENDOUSLY BLESSED ME. LISTEN
TO IT.

I ASKED GOD FOR STRENGTH THAT I MIGHT
ACHIEVE.
I WAS MADE WEAK THAT I MIGHT
LEARN HUMBLY TO OBEY.

I ASKED GOD FOR HEALTH THAT I MIGHT
DO GREATER THINGS.
I WAS GIVEN INFIRMITY THAT I MIGHT
DO BETTER THINGS.

I ASKED FOR RICHES THAT I MIGHT
BE HAPPY.
I WAS GIVEN POVERTY THAT I MIGHT
BE WISE.

I ASKED FOR POWER THAT I MIGHT
HAVE THE PRAISE OF MEN.
I WAS GIVEN WEAKNESS THAT I MIGHT
FEEL THE NEED OF GOD.

I ASKED FOR ALL THINGS THAT I MIGHT
ENJOY LIFE.
I WAS GIVEN LIFE THAT I MIGHT
ENJOY ALL THINGS.

I GOT NOTHING THAT I ASKED FOR –
BUT EVERYTHING I HAD HOPED FOR....
ALMOST DESPITE MYSELF, MY UNSPOKEN PRAYERS
WERE ANSWERED
I AM AMONG ALL MEN MOST RICHLY BLESSED.²

9. THE LAST LESSON IS, GOD ALWAYS GIVE US WHAT WE NEED.
I HEARD ABOUT TWO STORES THAT WERE ACROSS THE STREET FROM
EACH OTHER, HIGHLY COMPETITIVE, ALWAYS TRYING TO GET AHEAD.
THE MANAGER OF ONE STORE CAME OUT ONE DAY AND NAILED A GREAT
BIG SIGN OVER THE FRONT OF HIS STORE THAT SAID, “IF YOU WANT IT, WE
HAVE IT.” WELL THE MANAGER FROM THE OTHER STORE WALKED OUT
AND SAW THAT SIGN, THOUGHT ABOUT IT FOR A FEW MOMENTS, WENT
BACK INTO HIS STORE, AND AWHILE LATER CAME OUT WITH A SIGN HE
NAILED OVER HIS STORE THAT SAID, “IF WE DON’T HAVE IT, YOU
DON’T NEED IT.” I CAN TELL YOU SOMETHING RIGHT NOW, NO MATTER
WHAT YOU MAY THINK, IF YOU DON’T HAVE IT IT’S BECAUSE GOD KNOWS
AT THIS POINT IN YOUR LIFE YOU DON’T NEED IT.

10. YOU SEE, WHAT THE LORD WAS TRYING TO TEACH US HERE
WAS THIS. IT IS OUR JOB TO SERVE GOD. IT IS HIS JOB TO SUPPLY US.
NOW MOST PEOPLE HAVE THAT BACKWARDS. MOST PEOPLE THINK
THAT IT IS OUR JOB TO SUPPLY US AND IT IS GOD’S JOB TO SERVE
US. IF THEY COULD, THEY WOULD SING THE OLD HYMN THIS WAY:

I’LL HAVE MY OWN WAY, LORD,
I’LL HAVE MY OWN WAY,
I’LL BE THE POTTER, YOU BE THE CLAY;
I’LL MOLD YOU AND MAKE YOU AFTER MY WILL,
WHILE YOU ARE WAITING, YIELDED AND STILL.

11. IT IS EXACTLY THAT ATTITUDE THAT CUTS OFF THE BLESSING OF GOD. YOU SEE, IN A REAL SENSE, WE HAVE BEEN CALLED TO LIVE FROM HAND TO MOUTH. BUT THAT'S ALRIGHT IF IT'S HIS HAND AND MY MOUTH. I HEARD ABOUT A MISSIONARY WHO WAS GETTING READY TO EMBARK AND GO AWAY TO A FOREIGN COUNTRY. AS HE WAS GETTING ON THE SHIP, JUST GOING UP THE GANGWAY, A FRIEND OF HIS, WHO WAS A VERY WEALTHY PERSON, CAME TO HIM AND SLIPPED AN ENVELOPE INTO HIS HAND THAT WAS SEALED.

12. HIS FRIEND SAID, "YOU TAKE THIS ENVELOPE, AND IF AT ANY TIME WHILE YOU ARE OVERSEAS YOU COME TO THE PLACE WHERE YOU HAVE EXHAUSTED EVERY OTHER POSSIBILITY, AND YOU DON'T WHERE ELSE TO TURN, AND YOU HAVE A NEED THAT YOU CANNOT MEET ANYWHERE ELSE, OPEN THE ENVELOPE."

13. WELL, THE MISSIONARY TOOK THE ENVELOPE, THANKED HIM, PUT IT IN HIS POCKET, WENT UP THE GANGPLANK AND HE STAYED ON THAT MISSION FIELD FOR TWENTY YEARS. AT THE END OF TWENTY YEARS HE CAME BACK HOME, WALKED DOWN THAT SAME GANGPLANK, MET BY THAT SAME WEALTHY FRIEND, AND HE RETURNED THE ENVELOPE BACK TO THE MAN, STILL SEALED, STILL UNOPENED, AND HE SAID, "NEVER DID I COME TO A PLACE WHERE I DID NOT KNOW WHERE TO TURN, NOR WHAT TO DO."

14. DO YOU WANT TO MAKE THE REST OF YOUR LIFE THE BEST OF YOUR LIFE? YOU ACCEPT JESUS CHRIST AS YOUR LORD. PUT HIM FIRST. LIVE EVERY MOMENT FOR HIM, AND HE WILL TAKE CARE OF THE REST.

THE POWER OF PURPOSEFUL PRAYING

1. WHEN WE COMPARE OURSELVES TO THE EARLY CHURCH, WE TEND TO BELIEVE THAT WE HAVE BECOME FAR ADVANCED TO THEIR PRIMITIVE WAY OF DOING THINGS. WE LOOK AT THEM AND LOOK AT US AND MARVEL AT THE TREMENDOUS DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE TWO. AFTER ALL, THEY DID NOT HAVE THE TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANTAGES THAT WE DO TODAY. THEY DID NOT HAVE THE TRAINED CLERGY, THE SEMINARIES, THE COLLEGES, THE PH.D.s THAT WE DO TODAY. THEY DID NOT HAVE THE TREMENDOUS WORSHIP FACILITIES AND EDUCATIONAL BUILDINGS, AND FAMILY LIFE CENTERS THAT WE HAVE TODAY) AND, CAN YOU BELIEVE IT THEY DIDN'T EVEN HAVE A SUNDAY SCHOOL BOARD OR CHURCH. THERE IS A TREMENDOUS DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE EARLY CHURCH AND THE CHURCH OF THE 20TH CENTURY.

2. BUT AS I TAKE A SECOND GLANCE AT THE EARLY CHURCH, AND THEN I TAKE A LONG LOOK AT THE MODERN CHURCH, I SEE MORE EVIDENCE THAT WE HAVE DIGRESSED THAN THAT WE HAVE PROGRESSED.

3. IN ACTS 2:47 I READ THAT THE EARLY CHURCH WAS "PRAISING GOD AND HAVING FAVOR WITH ALL THE PEOPLE AND THE LORD WAS ADDING TO THEIR NUMBER DAILY THOSE WHO WERE BEING SAVED."

HOW MANY CHURCHES DO YOU KNOW OF WHERE PEOPLE ARE BEING SAVED EVERY DAY? HOW MANY CHURCHES DO YOU KNOW OF WHERE PEOPLE ARE BEING SAVED AT EVERY SERVICE? HOW MANY CHURCHES DO YOU KNOW OF WHERE PEOPLE ARE EVEN SAVED EVERY WEEK? DID YOU KNOW THAT IN THE AVERAGE SOUTHERN BAPTIST CHURCH PEOPLE AREN'T EVEN SAVED EVERY MONTH. WELL, WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE? I BELIEVE THAT THE DIFFERENCE IS FOUND IN ACTS 2:41:

"AND THEY WERE CONTINUALLY DEVOTING THEMSELVES TO THE APOSTLES TEACHING AND THE FELLOWSHIP TO THE BREAKING OF BREAD AND TO PRAYER."

WHATEVER ELSE THE EARLY CHURCH WAS..IT WAS A PRAYING CHURCH. IT WAS A CHURCH DEPENDENT UPON GOD, DEVOTED TO GOD, AND DETERMINED WITH GOD TO REACH A LOST WORLD FOR JESUS CHRIST.

4. OR, AGAIN, I LOOK AT TODAY'S PREACHER, AND COMPARE IT WITH THE PREACHERS OF YESTERYEAR. TODAY WE HAVE TRAINED CLERGY. WE'VE GOT SO MANY DOCTORS IN THE PULPIT YOU'D THINK GOD WAS SICK. WE HAVE PREACHERS WITH DEGREES AND PEDIGREES THAT ARE ABSOLUTELY IMPECCABLE. THEY DIDN'T HAVE SEMINARIES BACK IN THE DAYS OF PAUL AND PETER AND JOHN AND YET THESE MEN WHO WERE SO OFTEN UNLEARNED UNEDUCATED WITHOUT ANY FORMAL TRAINING WOULD PACK OUT COLISEUMS, SYNAGOGUES, AND TEMPLES EVERYWHERE THEY WENT AND THEY WERE WALKING "GODGRANADES" RADIATING WITH THE POWER OF GOD EXPLODING WITH THE STRENGTH OF THE GOSPEL FOR EXAMPLE: APOLLOS IS DESCRIBED IN ACTS 13:2

"NOW A CERTAIN JEW NAMED APOLLOS AN ALEXANDRIAN BY BIRTH AN ELOQUENT MAN CAME TO EPHESUS AND HE WAS MIGHTY IN THE SCRIPTURES. THIS MAN HAD BEEN INSTRUCTED IN THE WAY OF THE LORD AND BEING FERVENT IN SPIRIT HE WAS SPEAKING AND TEACHING ACCURATELY THE THINGS CONCERNING JESUS."

AND THEN IN VERSE 28: "FOR HE POWERFULLY REFUTED THE JEWS IN PUBLIC REMONSTRATING BY THE SCRIPTURE" THAT JESUS WAS THE CHRIST."

APOLLOS WAS SUCH A POWERFUL PREACHER THAT EVEN THE JEWS COULD NOT TALK WITH HIM. HE WOULD CONVERT JEWS RIGHT AND LEFT. HE COULD BRING JEWS TO JESUS LIKE PICKING GRAPES OFF OF A VINE AND IF YOU EVER TRIED TO WITNESS TO A JEW, YOU KNOW WHAT A POWERFUL PREACHER APOLLOS MUST HAVE BEEN.

HOW MANY POWERFUL PREACHERS DO YOU KNOW TODAY? LET'S FACE IT--I WOULDN'T WALK ACROSS THE STREET TO HEAR MOST BAPTIST PREACHERS PREACH. I HEARD ABOUT A CHURCH ONE TIME WHO WANTED TO GET RID OF A PASTOR AND ONE OLD DEACON HELD OUT AGAINST FIRING HIM. FINALLY SOME MEN CAME TO HIM AND SAID, "WHY IN THE WORLD DO YOU TAKE UP FOR OUR PASTOR. HE'S ABSOLUTELY THE WORST PREACHER IN THE WORLD. AND THE OLD DEACON SAID, "IF HE CURED YOUR INSOMNIA, YOU'D BE FOR HIM TOO." VERY FEW PREACHERS HAVE THE POWER, THE ZEAL, THE FERVENCY OF AN APOLLOS. WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE. I BELIEVE IT IS FOUND IN:

ACTS 6:4, "BUT WE WILL DEVOTE OURSELVES TO PRAYER AND TO THE MINISTRY OF THE WORD."

AND, NOTE THE ORDER, FIRST TO PRAYER AND THEN TO THE MINISTRY OF THE WORD. THE REASON WHY THE EARLY CHURCH WAS PACKED WITH POWERFUL PREACHERS IS BECAUSE IT WAS PERVADED BY PRAYING PREACHERS. PRAYER IS THE DIFFERENCE.

5. EVERYTHING WE DO IN THIS CHURCH DEPENDS ON PRAYER. AND, THAT MAY VERY WELL BE THE REASON WHY WE ARE NOT DOING SOME THINGS LIKE WE OUGHT TO DO THEM AS WELL AS WE OUGHT TO DO THEM AND AS MUCH AS WE OUGHT TO DO THEM. I BELIEVE ALL OF US WANT TO BUILD A GREAT EVANGELISTIC CHURCH HERE; BUT, LET ME TELL YOU SOMETHING. A CHURCH THAT TRIES TO WIN PEOPLE TO JESUS WITHOUT PRAYING IS FOOLISH. A CHURCH THAT PRAYS WITHOUT TRYING TO WIN PEOPLE TO JESUS IS HYPOCRITICAL. BUT, A CHURCH WHO PRAYS AND THEN GOES OUT TO WIN PEOPLE TO JESUS IS EVANGELISTIC.

6. IN A CHURCH, IN A PASTOR, IN AN INDIVIDUAL CHRISTIAN'S LIFE WHEREVER THERE IS A LOSS OF POWER THERE IS ALWAYS A LACK OF PRAYER. WHENEVER YOU HAVE A POWER SHORTAGE IN THE CHURCH YOU HAVE A PRAYER FAILURE SOMEWHERE IN THE FELLOWSHIP.

7. IN MATTHEW 7:7-11 JESUS MAKES A STARTLING, DOGMATIC, DEFINITE STATEMENT ABOUT PRAYER. AND THIS STATEMENT ON PRAYER ASSUMES ONE VERY VITAL FACT--THAT GOD HEARS AND THAT GOD ANSWERS PRAYER. OW IF THAT ASSUMPTION IS TRUE, AND THE INERRANT BIBLE PICTURES A GOD WHO HEARS AND ANSWERS PRAYER, THEN WE CAN DO NO MORE UNTIL WE PRAY BUT WE CAN THINK ABOUT THE POWER OF PURPOSEFUL PRAYER.

I. THE PROMISE CONCERNING PRAYER - VERSES 7, 8
AT FIRST GLANCE, THESE VERSES APPEAR JUST TOO GOOD TO BE TRUE. WITH ALL OF THE AUTHORITY AND POWER OF GOD BEHIND IT, JESUS SAYS THAT PRAYER GET RESULTS. GOD HEARS US WHEN WE ASK. GOD REVEALS HIMSELF WHEN WE SEEK AND GOD OPENS WHEN WE KNOCK.

I BELIEVE THAT OUR LIVES OUGHT TO BE THE STORY OF ANSWERED PRAYER--AFTER ANSWERED PRAYER--AFTER ANSWERED PRAYER. I BELIEVE THAT THE BIOGRAPHY OF EVERY CHRISTIAN SHOULD BEAR THE TITLE "ANSWERED PRAYER." ONE DAY WHEN WE ALL GET TO HEAVEN, WE ARE GOING TO BE ASTOUNDED AT THE THINGS WE DID NOT EXPERIENCE BECAUSE WE DID NOT PRAY. THE BIBLE SAYS IN: JAMES 4:2 "YOU HAVE NOT BECAUSE YOU ASK NOT."

WE DON'T HAVE AS MANY SOULWINNERS IN OUR CHURCH TODAY AS WE OUGHT TO. ONE REASON BEING THAT WE HAVE NOT ASKED FOR THEM BECAUSE JESUS SAID, "PRAY THAT THE LORD WOULD SEND WORKERS INTO HIS HARVEST. THERE ARE PEOPLE WHO ARE SICK TODAY WHO HAVE NOT EXPERIENCED THE HEALING OF GOD, BECAUSE WE HAVE NOT PRAYED FOR THEM. FOR THE BIBLE SAYS IN:

JAMES 5:15 "AND THE PRAYER OFFERED IN FAITH, WILL RESTORE THE ONE WHO IS SICK AND THE LORD WILL RAISE HIM UP."

YOU SEE WHAT WE NEED IN OUR COUNTRY TODAY IS NOT A DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE. WE NEED A DECLARATION WHEN YOU PRAY YOU ARE SAYING THAT YOU ARE TOTALLY DEPENDENT UPON GOD. WHEN YOU DON T YOU'RE SAYING THAT YOU ARE TOTALLY INDEPENDENT FROM GOD. AND, GOD'S GREATEST BLESSINGS COME TO THAT CHURCH OR TO THAT CHRISTIAN WHO DELIBERATELY PUTS HIMSELF IN A PLACE WHERE HE MUST BE ABSOLUTELY DEPENDENT UPON GOD. NOW I WANT YOU TO NOTICE THREE THINGS THAT JESUS SAYS HERE CONCERNING PRAYER:

A. COMMANDED

1. NOTE THE VERBS. THESE VERBS ARE IN THE IMPERATIVE MOOD. THAT IS, JESUS IS NOT REQUESTING THAT WE PRAY OR ASKING US TO PRAY; IT IS A COMMAND AND THIS PASSAGE N PRAYER IS SANDWICHED BETWEEN TWO COMMANDS. HE SAYS IN CHAPTER 7:1 DON'T JUDGE LEST YOU BE JUDGED YOURSELVES HE SAYS IN VERSE 33 OF CHAPTER 6 SEEK FIRST THE KINGDOM OF GOD. HE SAYS IN VERSE 19 OF CHAPTER 6 DO NOT LAY UP FOR YOURSELVES TREASURES UPON EARTH. AND HERE HE GIVES US A COMMAND TO PRAY.

2. YOU SEE PRAYERLESSNESS IS NOT SIMPLE SHIRKING OF ONE'S DUTY. PRAYERLESSNESS IS A SIN, IT IS AS MUCH A SIN AS TO JUDGE SOMEONE ELSE OR TO RETURN EVIL FOR GOOD OR TO HATE YOUR ENEMIES OR TO CURSE AND USE FOUL LANGUAGE.

3. SIN IS NOT DOING RIGHT THINGS. YOU SEE SOMETIMES SIN CAN SMELL SO SWEET AND IT CAN LOOK SO INNOCENT. IT CAN APPEAR TO BE AS HARMLESS AS A DOVE AND AS INVISIBLE AS THE WIND. FOR EXAMPLE: HERE IS A MAN SITTING AT HOME WEDNESDAY NIGHT WATCHING TELEVISION. NOW, HE OUGHT TO BE A PRAYER MEETING. HERE IS NO REASON WHY HE SHOULDN'T BE AT

PRAYER MEETING, HE NEEDS TO BE AT PRAYER MEETING AND HE IS SITTING THERE KNOWING HE OUGHT TO BE AT PRAYER MEETING BUT HE DOESN'T COME. NOW THAT MAN IS SINNING. NOW YOU RIDE BY HIS HOUSE IT LOOKS LIKE HE IS THE PARAGON OF VIRTUE. HE IS JUST SITTING THERE DRINKING A COKE WATCHING HIS TELEVISION BEING A GOOD FAMILY MAN SPENDING TIME WITH HIS FAMILY; BUT, HE OUGHT TO BE IN CHURCH. IT IS A SIN TO HIM. OR, HERE IS ANOTHER MAN AND HE'S SITTING AT HOME WATCHING TV ON A THURSDAY NIGHT WATCHING A VERY HARMLESS TELEVISION PROGRAM AND THE LORD IN THAT STILL SMALL VOICE SPEAKS TO HIM AND SAYS, 'YOU KNOW YOU VE NOT EVEN. READ YOUR BIBLE TODAY. YOU'VE NOT EVEN PRAYED AT ALL TODAY.'" BUT INSTEAD OF GETTING UP TURNING OFF THE TELEVISION GETTING HIS BIBLE AND SPENDING SOME TIME WITH THE LORD, HE JUST IGNORES THAT LITTLE SMALL VOICE AND CONTINUES TO WATCH THE TELEVISION. THAT IS A SIN. IT IS AS MUCH A SIN AS BEARING FALSE WITNESS AGAINST YOUR NEIGHBOR OR COVETING YOUR NEIGHBOR'S WIFE.

4. THE GREATEST SIN IN THE CHURCH TODAY IS THE SIN OF PRAYERLESSNESS, THE BIBLE SAYS IN:

I SAMUEL 12:23 "MOREOVER AS FOR ME FAR BE IT FROM ME THAT I SHOULD SIN AGAINST THE LORD BY CEASING TO PRAY FOR YOU."

THERE IS SIN IN THE CAMP TONIGHT IN OUR CHURCH AND IT IS THE SIN OF PRAYERLESSNESS.

B. CONTINUOUS

1. THE VERBS HERE ASK, SEEK AND KNOCK ARE NOT ONLY IN THE IMPERATIVE MOOD THEY ARE ALSO IN THE PRESENT TENSES AND IN THE GREEK, THAT MEANS ,CONTINUOUS ACTION. SO JESUS WAS REALLY SAYING "ASK CONTINUOUSLY, SEEK CONTINUOUSLY, KNOCK CONTINUOUSLY."

2. PRAYER IS NOT SO MUCH AN ACTION AS IT IS AN ATTITUDE. PAUL SAID IN:

I THESSALONIANS 5:17 "PRAY WITHOUT CEASING."

SOMEONE ONCE ASKED BILLY GRAHAM WHAT IS THE GREATEST LESSON YOU HAVE EVER LEARNED ABOUT PRAYER AND BILLY GRAHAM SAID, "I HAVE LEARNED AND AM STILL LEARNING IT TO PRAY WITHOUT CEASING."

3. DID YOU KNOW THAT THE BIBLE SAYS THAT WE OUGHT TO BE IN PRAYER ALL THE TIME ABOUT EVERYTHING? THE BOY SCOUTS HAVE A MOTTO CALLED: BE PREPARED. I THINK THE CHRISTIANS OUGHT TO HAVE A MOTTO: BE PRAYING. IT WILL AMAZE YOU HOW IT WILL CHANGE YOUR LIFE IF YOU WILL BEGIN TO REACT TO EVERYTHING WITH PRAYER. THE BIBLE SAYS THAT WE ARE TO BE THANKFUL IN ALL THINGS. GOD'S PEOPLE HAVE NOT YET LEARNED THE POWER OF PRAISE AND THANKSGIVING.

4. WE ARE TOLD IN THE BOOK OF ACTS THAT AFTER THE DISCIPLES HAD BEEN BEATEN AND SCOURGED FOR PREACHING THE GOSPEL OF JESUS THAT WHEN THEY WALKED OUT OF THAT PRISON THEY WERE PRAISING AND THANKING GOD THEY HAD BEEN WORTHY--COUNTED WORTHY TO SUFFER FOR HIS NAME. PERSISTENT PRAYER AND PERSEVERING PRAISE OUGHT TO BE THE TWIN PILLARS OF THE TEMPLE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

5. LET ME GIVE YOU AN EXAMPLE OF HOW THIS OUGHT TO WORK OUT: MY WIFE AND I WERE GOING DOWN TO OUR CHURCH IN KENTUCKY, MY FIRST LITTLE COUNTRY PASTORATE, AND JUST BEFORE CHRISTMAS AND IT HAD BEEN RAINING AND THE ROAD WAS WET AND SLICK AND WE WERE COMING AROUND A CURVE DOING ABOUT 45 MPH WHEN A MAIL TRUCK HAD PULLED UP BESIDE A MAILBOX AND HE WAS KIND OF HALF IN THE ROAD AND HALF OFF THE ROAD. WELL, ANOTHER TRUCK LOADED WITH FURNITURE WAS COMING BEHIND HIM IN THE OPPOSITE DIRECTION FROM US AND HE HAD TO SWERVE AROUND HIM TO AVOID HITTING HIM. WHEN HE DID, HE SAW US. HE LOCKED ON HIS BRAKES AND WHEN HE DID THAT THE TRUCK FISHTAILED AND IT WAS TURNED BROADSIDE RIGHT THERE IN THE MIDDLE OF THE HIGHWAY WELL, I HAD TO MAKE A SPLIT-SECOND DECISION. EITHER HIT THAT TRUCK BROADSIDE OR TAKE TO THE DITCH. WELL, I SWERVED AND TOOK TO THE DITCH. WELL, THE GRASS WAS WET AND I WAS TRYING TO GET BACK ON THE ROAD BUT EVERYTIME I TURNED MY WHEELS WE JUST KEPT SLIDING DOWN THE GRASS SO I JUST HELD ON AND WE CAME TO A PIPE, A DRAINAGE PIPE THERE IN THE MIDDLE OF THE ROAD AND IT WAS A MOST LIKE A NATURAL RAMP. WE HIT THAT RAMP AND I KNEW ONE OF TWO THINGS WOULD HAPPEN EITHER IT WOULD FLIP US OVER OR WE'D GO SAILING THROUGH THE AIR. WELL WE WENT SAILING THROUGH THE AIR AND WE

SAILED PROBABLY 100 FEET AND LANDED AND BOUNCED TWICE AND CAME TO A STOP IN THE MIDDLE OF A PASTURE UP AGAINST A BARBED-WIRE FENCE. NOW WE COULD HAVE GOTTEN VERY ANGRY, VERY UPSET, WE COULD HAVE CURSED THE MAN WHO RAN US OFF THE ROAD AND WE COULD HAVE CURSED OUR BAD LUCK BUT MY WIFE AND I JUST BOWED AND JUST THANKED THE LORD THAT WE WERE NOT HURT. I WASN'T WORRIED ABOUT THE CAR. I WASN'T EVEN REALLY WORRIED ABOUT US; BUT, I WAS CONCERNED THAT I GIVE THANKS TO MY HEAVENLY FATHER WHO WAS WATCHING OVER ME. THAT IS WHAT JESUS MEANS HERE WHEN HE SAYS IN EVERY SITUATION BE ASKING, BE SEEKING AND BE KNOCKING.

C. CONFIDENT

1. WE OUGHT TO PRAY CONFIDENTLY BECAUSE GOD WILL HEAR AND IS LIKE E. F. HUTTON, WHEN WE TALK GOD LISTENS. YOU HAVE HEARD PEOPLE SAY SOMETIMES THAT GOD SOMETIMES DOES NOT ANSWER PRAYER. GOD ALWAYS ANSWERS PRAYER. NOW SOMETIMES HE ANSWERS YES, SOMETIMES HE ANSWERS NO AND SOMETIMES HE ANSWERS YES, BUT AND SOMETIMES HE ANSWERS WAIT A WHILE BUT GOD ALWAYS ALWAYS, ALWAYS, ANSWERS PRAYER.

2. BUT THERE'S A CERTAIN KIND OF PERSON THAT CAN CLAIM THIS PROMISE. WHEN HE SAYS ASK AND IT SHALL BE GIVEN TO YOU, SEEK AND YOU SHALL FIND, KNOCK AND IT SHALL BE OPENED TO YOU, WHO ARE THE YOU? WHO IS HE TALKING TO? WELL, LOOK BACK UP IN VERSE 33 OR CHAPTER 6 THE ONLY PERSON WHO CAN CLAIM THIS PROMISE FROM GOD IS THE PERSON WHO IS SEEKING FIRST GOD'S KINGDOM. NOW MARK THIS DOWN: PROPER PRAYING IS DETERMINED BY PROPER PRIORITIES.

THE BIBLE SAYS AGAIN IN THE BOOK OF JAMES "THE EFFECTUAL FERVENT PRAYER OF A RIGHTEOUS MAN AVAILETH MUCH." UNDER THE RIGHT CONDITIONS WITH THE RIGHT ATTITUDE AND THE RIGHT PRIORITIES IF YOU ASK, IF YOU SEEK, IF YOU KNOCK YOU WILL GET YOU'LL FIND AND IT WILL BE OPENED.

II. THE PARABLE ABOUT PRAYER - VERSES 9-11

NOW JESUS GIVES A LITTLE PARABLE TO DESCRIBE THE TRANSACTION CALLED PRAYER. AND HE GIVES TWO EXAMPLES: FIRST HE MENTIONS OUR EARTHLY FATHER AND THEN HE MENTIONS OUR ETERNAL FATHER.

A. EARTHLY FATHER

1. NOW JESUS IS SAYING THAT ONE OF THE MARKS OF A GOOD FATHER IS HE DESIRES TO MEET THE DESIRES OF HIS CHILDREN. THOSE OF US WHO ARE PARENTS KNOW AND HAVE LEARNED THAT THE JOY OF CHRISTMAS IS SEEING YOUR CHILDREN GET UP AND OPEN THEIR PRESENTS UNDER THE CHRISTMAS TREE AND TO GET WHAT THEY HAVE ALWAYS WANTED TO FULFILL THEIR DESIRES.

2. NOTICE AGAIN VERSE 9. NO JUST THE OPPOSITE OF THAT IS TRUE FOR HUSBANDS AND WIVES OR AT LEAST IT IS AT MY HOUSE. EVERY CHRISTMAS ME WIFE ASKS ME FOR A STONE BUT ALL I'LL GIVE HER IS A LOAF. BUT IT IS TO BE DIFFERENT FOR CHILDREN AND THEIR PARENTS.

3. NOW THE SECOND MARK OF A GOOD PARENT IS NOT ONLY DO THEY DESIRE TO MEET THE DESIRES OF THEIR CHILDREN BUT DESIRE TO GIVE WHAT IS BEST FOR THEIR CHILDREN. FOR HE SAYS IN VERSE 11 "IF YOU THEN BEING EVIL KNOW HOW TO GIVE GOOD GIFTS TO YOUR CHILDREN." YOU SEE IT IS FAR MORE IMPORTANT TO SUPPLY A CHILD'S NEED THAN IT IS HIS WANTS. WHEN I WAS GROWING UP, NEVER DID WANT A WHIPPING BUT THERE WERE TIMES WHEN I NEEDED A WHIPPING. AND I THANK GOD THAT I HAD PARENTS WHO DECIDED TO MEET MY NEEDS INSTEAD OF GIVING ME MY WANTS. SO HE SAYS NOW THIS IS THE MARK OF A GOOD EARTHLY FATHER.

B. ETERNAL FATHER

1. THEN HE TURNS AROUND AND SAYS NOW WITH THE EARTHLY FATHER IN MIND LOOK HOW MUCH GREATER IS OUR ETERNAL FATHER. YOU SEE THERE IS A TREMENDOUS DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE EARTHLY FATHER NO MATTER HOW GOOD A FATHER HE MIGHT BE AND OUR ETERNAL FATHER IN HEAVEN. AND THAT IS WE ARE EVIL BUT GOD IS GOOD. NOW YOU THINK ABOUT THAT FOR JUST A MOMENT. CHINK OF THE KIND OF FATHER THAT GOD IS. HE ALWAYS SETS THE RIGHT

EXAMPLE FOR HIS CHILDREN. HE NEVER TEACHES THEM THE WRONG THING. HE NEVER MAKES A MISTAKE IN REARING THEM. HE IS NEITHER TOO LENIENT NOR TOO STRICT.

2. LET ME SAY A WORD HERE RIGHT NOW TO MOMS AND DADS. ONE OF THE MOST PAINFUL THINGS YOU NEED TO DO AS A PARENT BUT ALSO ONE OF THE GREATEST THINGS YOU CAN DO AS A PARENT IS TO EACH YOUR CHILDREN THAT YOU ARE NOT PERFECT. DON'T HIDE YOUR MISTAKES BUT RATHER LET YOUR CHILDREN LEARN FROM YOUR MISTAKES. IF YOU'VE MADE A MISTAKE AS A PARENT SET YOUR CHILDREN DOWN AND TELL THEM THAT YOU'VE MAKE A MISTAKE. YOU SEE IF YOUR CHILDREN SEE YOU AND ALL YOUR IMPERFECTIONS WHEN THEY ARE YOUNG Y LL NOT BE DISALLUSIONED WHEN THEY GET OLDER. I HEARD ABOUT A LITTLE BOY NAMED BILLY WHO CAME HOME AND SAID TO HIS DAD. "DADDY, JIMMY SAYS THAT HIS DAD HAS A LIST OF MEN THAT HE CAN WHIP AND YOUR NAME IS THE FIRST NAME ON THE LIST. THE NEXT SCENE IS BILLY'S DADDY CONFRONTING JIMMY'S DADDY. "MY SON SAID THAT YOU HAVE A LIST OF MEN THAT YOU CAN WHIP AND MY NAME IS FIRST ON THE LIST. IS THAT RIGHT?" "YES, THAT'S RIGHT. "WELL, YOU CAN'T DO IT." "WHAT YOU GONNA DO ABOUT THAT?" BILLY'S DAD SAID. "WELL, I GUESS I'LL JUST HAVE TO TAKE YOUR NAME OFF THE LIST," SAID JIMMY'S DAD. YOU NEED TO LET YOUR CHILDREN TAKE YOUR NAME OFF THE LIST OF PERFECT PEOPLE. LET THEM KNOW RIGHT AWAY THAT YOU ARE HUMAN AND YOU'RE STILL TRYING TO LEARN AND BE WHAT GOD WANTS YOU TO BE. BUT, HIS POINT HERE IS THAT WE HAVE A FATHER WHO ALWAYS HEARS, WHO ALWAYS ANSWERS AND WHO WILL ALWAYS MEET EVERY REQUEST WE HAVE WITH THE BEST ANSWER.

CONCLUSION

THE ONLY PRAYER GOD CANNOT ANSWER IS THE PRAYER THAT IS NOT PRAYED. THE ONLY CHURCH GOD WILL NOT BLESS IS THE CHURCH THAT DOES NOT PRAY,

HE STANDS BEST WHO KNEELS MOST.
HE STANDS STRONGEST WHO KNEEL WEAKEST.
HE STANDS LONGEST WHO KNEELS STRONGEST.

EDUCATION – THAT'S WHAT LEARNING CAN DO.
PLANNING – THAT'S WHAT MAN CAN DO.
PRAYER – THAT'S WHAT GOD CAN DO.

THE WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD:
"THE PLAIN TRUTH ABOUT THE PLAIN TRUTH"

INTRODUCTION

1. I WAS FIRST REALLY INTRODUCED TO THE CULT THAT WE ARE EXAMINING TONIGHT ABOUT 4 YEARS AGO WHEN WAS A PASTOR IN KENTUCKY. YOUNG MAN IN Y CHURCH WHOM I HAD BEEN TRYING TO WIN TO THE LORD CAME BY TO SEE ME ONE DAY AND GAVE ME A COPY OF A BOOK BY HERBERT W ARMSTRONG ENTITLED, THE UNITED STATES AND THE BRITISH COMMONWEALTH IN PROPHECY. AS I BEGAN TO SKIM AND TO SCAN THAT BOOK CAME ACROSS SOME OF THE MOST PREPOSTEROUS AND OUTLANDISH TWISTING OF SCRIPTURE AND DOCTRINE THAT I HAVE EVER SEEN. THE THESIS OF THIS BOOK WAS THAT GREAT BRITAIN AND THE UNITED STATES ARE IN REALITY THE LOST TRIBES QF ISRAEL, A THEORY THAT IS OTHERWISE KNOWN AS BRITISH- ISRAELISM.

2. THUS I WAS INTRODUCED TO A MAN BY THE NAME OF HERBERT W. ARMSTRONG. ARMSTRONG IS THE FOUNDER OF THE RADIO CHURCH OF GOD OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD. PERHAPS YOU HAVE SEEN HIS PROGRAM ENTITLED, "THE WORLD TOMORROW." IN AIRPORTS AND COURTHOUSES AND HOSPITALS AND THEATERS YOU WILL SEE MAGAZINE RACK AFTER MAGAZINE RACK HOLDING A VERY ATTRACTIVE WELL PRINTED, WELL PUT TOGETHER PERIODICAL KNOWN AS THE PLAIN TRUTH WHICH IS READ BY SOMEWHERE BETWEEN 2 AND 3 MILLION PEOPLE. IT IS THE OFFICIAL MAGAZINE AND FOR ALL INTENTS AND PURPOSES THE OFFICIAL INTERPRETATION OF THE BIBLE WHICH IS BEING PERPETRATED BY ARMSTRONG.

3. HERBERT ARMSTRONG BEGAN HIS CAREER AS A PROMOTIONAL ADVERTISING MAN, WHICH IS ONE OF THE REASONS WHY HE IS SUCH AN EXPERT IN HIS SLICK MAILOUTS, MAGAZINES, TELEVISION PRODUCTIONS, ETC. HIS BUSINESS FAILED IN 1920 AND AROUND THAT TIME A NEIGHBOT HAD PERSUADED MRS. ARMSTRONG THAT THE SABBATH DAY WAS THE TRUE DAY OF WORSHIP FOR ALL GODLY PEOPLE. SHE BEGAN TO TRY TO PERSUADE HERBERT ARMSTRONG IN HER BELIEF AND IN TRYING TO PROVE HER WRONG HE NOT ONLY IN HIS OWN MIND PROVED HER TO BE RIGHT UNKNOWN, SOME OTHER AMAZING DOCTRINES HERETOFORE UNKNOWN. IN 1931 HE STARTED HIS EVANGELISTIC WORK IN OREGON AND IN 1934 HE FOUNDED THE PUBLICATION KNOWN AS THE PLAIN TRUTH AND ALSO BEGAN HIS

RADIO PROGRAM "THE WORLD TOMORROW" AND NAMED HIS CHURCH THE RADIO CHURCH OF GOD.

4. TODAY THIS CHURCH MOVEMENT HAS SEVERAL COLLEGES THE MOST FAMOUS OF WHICH IS THE AMBASSADOR COLLEGE IN PASADENA, CALIFORNIA, A VERY BEAUTIFUL COLLEGE ORNATE AND WELL FUNDED. HE HAS A SON BY THE NAME OF GARNER TED ARMSTRONG, A SILVER HAURED, GOLDEN-TONGUED, ELOQUENT, ARTICULATE, AUTHORITARIAN SPEAKER WHO AT ONE TIME WAS THE RIGHT HAND MAN OF HIS DAD BUT THEY HAVE SINCE PARTED WAYS AND HIS SON HAS FORMED A CHURCH KNOWN AS THE CHURCH OF GOD, INTERNATIONAL.

5. AS MANY OF THE OTHER CULTS THIS CHURCH CLAIMS TO BE THE ONLY TRUE CHURCH AND IF YOU DO NOT BELONG TO IT AND BELIEVE IN IT YOU ARE IN DEEP SPIRITUAL TROUBLE. ARMSTRONG HAS SAID "THE PROPHESES AND MYSTERIES OF GOD SEALED UNTIL NOW ARE TODAY REVEALED TO THOSE WHOM GOD HAS CHOSEN TO CARRY HIS LAST MESSAGE TO THE WORLD AS A WITNESS." IN OTHER WORDS THE TRUTH OF TRUTH HAS BEEN SEALED FOR 2000 YEARS UNTIL (GOD CHOSE TO REVEAL IT TO HERBERT ARMSTRONG. "ASTOUNDING AS IT MAY SEEM THERE IS NO OTHER WORK ON EARTH PROCLAIMING TO THE WHOLE WORLD THIS VERY SAME GOSPEL THAT JESUS TAUGHT AND PROCLAIMED." THAT IS NOBODY IS REALLY PREACHING THE REAL GOSPEL EXCEPT HERBERT ARMSTRONG. OF COURSE WE ARE GOING TO SEE THAT HIS GOSPEL IS REALLY NOT A GOSPEL AT ALL. HIS GOSPEL IS NOT A GOSPEL OF GRACE. IT IS A MANDATE OF WORKS AND WE ARE REMINDED OF WHAT THE APOSTLE PAUL SAID IN GALATIANS 1:9, "AS WE HAVE SAID BEFORE SO I SAY AGAIN NOW IF ANY MAN IS PREACHING TO YOU A GOSPEL CONTRARY TO THAT WHICH YOU RECEIVED LET HIM BE ACCURSED." HE GREEK WORD ANATHEMA LITERALLY MEANS LET HIM BE DAMNED.

6. THIS MOVEMENT IS A VERY DIFFICULT MOVEMENT TO NAIL DOWN. ARMSTRONG IS EVERY CLEVER. HE MIXES BITS OF THE TRUTH WITH LARGE CHUNKS OF ERROR WHICH POISONS HIS ENTIRE TEACHING. IT IS A MULTIFLAVORED DOCTRINE AN ECLECTIC SYNCRETISTIC HOMOGENIZATION OF DIFFERENT TEACHINGS FROM DIFFERENT CULTS. WE WILL SEE THE JEHOVAH'S WITNESS INFLUENCE. WE WILL SEE THE INFLUENCE OF THE SEVENTH DAY ADVENTISTS. WE WILL SEE THE INFLUENCE OF MORMONISM BELIEVE IT OR NOT IN THE TEACHING OF HERBERT ARMSTRONG.

I. THE NATURE OF GOD

1. "THE PURPOSE OF LIFE IS THAT IN GOD IS IN US. GOD IS REALLY RECREATING. AFTER HIS OWN KIND, REPRODUCING HIMSELF-AFTER HIS OWN KIND. FOR WE ARE UPON REAL CONVERSION AS YET UNBORN OF GOD. THEN THROUGH THE STUDY OF GOD'S REVELATION OF HIS WORD LIVING BY HIS VERY WORD, CONSTANT PRAYER, DAILY EXPERIENCE WITH TRIALS AND TESTINESS, WE GROW SPIRITUALLY MORE AND MORE LIKE GOD UNTIL AT THE TIME OF THE RESURRECTION WE SHALL BE INSTANTANEOUSLY CHANGED FROM MORTAL INTO IMMORTAL. WE SHALL THEN BE BORN OF GOD. WE SHALL THEN BE GOD. DO YOU REALLY GRASP IT. THE PURPOSE OF YOUR BEING ALIVE IS THAT FINALLY YOU BE BORN INTO THE KINGDOM OF GOD WHEN YOU WILL ACTUALLY BE GOD, EVEN AS JESUS WAS IN HIS GOD AND HIS FATHER, A DIFFERENT PERSON ALSO IS GOD. YOU ARE SETTING OUT ON A TRAINING TO BECOME CREATOR, TO BECOME GOD. NOW WHO DOES THAT REMIND YOU OF THAT WE ARE TO BECOME LIKE GOD? WELL, IT REMINDS ME FIRST OF ALL OF SATAN. THAT WAS WHAT GOT HIM THROWN OUT OF HEAVEN TO BEGIN WITH. IT IS WHAT LED TO THE DOWNFALL OF MANKIND. IT ALSO REMINDS US OF ANOTHER CULT WE HAVE STUDIED, MORMONISM. THE MORMONS TEACH THAT WE ULTIMATELY ARE GOING TO BECOME GODS. I WILL JUST SIMPLY REMIND YOU THAT NO MAN CAN BECOME GOD NOR CAN ANY DEVIL OR ANGEL BECOME GOD. THERE IS NO GOD BESIDE OUR GOD AND THE LORD OUR GOD IS ONE. ARMSTRONG GOES ON TO SAY "MAN WAS CREATED TO LITERALLY BECOME GOD." HE THEN ADDS "WE SHALL ONE DAY BE DIVINE AS HE IS DIVINE."

2. WHAT ARMSTRONG FAILS TO UNDERSTAND IS THAT WE WILL NEVER BECOME GOD. WHAT WE ARE GOING TO BECOME IS GODLIKE. WE WILL NEVER BE LIKE THE DIVINE. I JOHN 3:2 SAYS, "BELOVED NOW WE ARE CHILDREN OF GOD AND IT HAS NOT APPEARED AS YET WHAT WE SHALL BE WE KNOW THAT WHEN HE APPEARS WE SHALL BE LIKE HIM BECAUSE WE SHALL BE JUST AS HE IS." THIS UNIVERSE LIKE DODGE CITY AT HIGH NOON IS NOT BIG ENOUGH TO HOLD 2 GODS. IT IS ONLY BIG ENOUGH TO HOLD ONE GOD. IT WAS CREATED BY ONE GOD, CREATED FOR ONE GOD AND ONLY EXISTS IN ONE GOD.

II. THE NATURE OF CHRIST

1. NOW I REMIND YOU THAT THE KEY TO UNLOCKING THE DOOR OF ANY GROUP OR INDIVIDUAL IS TO FIND OUT WHAT

HE OR THEY BELIEVE ABOUT THE LORD JESUS CHRIST. LISTEN TO WHAT ARMSTRONG SAYS ABOUT OUR LORD. "JESUS ALONE OF ALL HUMANS HAS SO FAR BEEN SAVED." THAT IS YOU ARE NOT SAVED AND I AM NOT SAVED. ONLY JESUS HAS BEEN SAVED. WELL THERE ARE JUST 2 THINGS WRONG WITH THAT STATEMENT. NUMBER 1 THAT STATEMENT ASSUMES JESUS NEEDED TO BE SAVED WHICH HE DID NOT. NUMBER 2 IT ASSUMES THAT WE CANNOT BE SAVED HERE ON EARTH WHEN IN FACT ACCORDING TO THE WORD OF GOD A MAN CAN KNOW FOR SURE HERE THIS MOMENT, TODAY RIGHT NOW THAT HE IS INDEED SAVED. HE GOES ON TO SAY, "HE WAS THE FIRST HUMAN BEING TO EVER ACHIEVE IT, TO BE PERFECTED, FINISHED AS A PERFECT CHARACTER. CHRIST, ONE OF THOSE BEING IN THE GODHEAD HAD NOW BEEN CHANGED INTO FLESH. STILL HAVING THE PERSONALITY AND THE WILL TO DO RIGHT WHICH DISTINGUISHED HIM AS AN ENTITY YET NOW HAD BECOME HUMAN. HAVING HUMAN NATURE WITH ALL OF ITS DESIRES, WEAKNESSES AND LUST AND SUBJECT TO DEATH JUST LIKE ANY OTHER HUMAN." NOW I BELIEVE THAT JESUS CHRIST WAS FULLY HUMAN. HE WAS JUST AS MUCH MAN AS IF NOT GOD AND JUST AS MUCH GOD AS IF NOT MAN. BUT HE WAS NOT ALL GOD AND NO MAN OR ALL MAN AND NO GOD. HE WAS FULLY MAN, THE GOODMAN. JESUS HAD A HUMAN NATURE BUT NOT WITH ALL OF ITS DESIRES AND LUST AND WEAKNESSES AS ARMSTRONG SAYS. THE BIBLE SAYS JESUS WAS "TEMPTED AS WE ARE YET WITHOUT SIN." YOU SEE NOT ONLY WAS JESUS A MAN. JESUS HAS A PERFECT MAN. HE GOES ON TO SAY ABOUT JESUS, "THIS IS THE TRUTH ABOUT WHICH MILLIONS ARE DECEIVED. THE SATAN INSPIRED DOCTRINE THAT JESUS IS NOT HUMAN THAT HE DID NOT INHERIT THE SINFUL NATURE OF ADAM THAT HE DID NOT HAVE ALL THE NORMAL NATURE OF ADAM THAT HE DID NOT HAVE ALL OF THE NORMAL WEAKNESSES AND PASSIONS AGAINST WHICH WE ALL HAVE TO STRUGGLE, IN A WORD THAT JESUS DID NOT COME IN THE FLESH AS A NORMAL HUMAN BEING THIS IS THE DOCTRINE OF THE ANTI-CHRIST." HIS DOCTRINE IN REALITY IS THE DOCTRINE OF THE ANTI-CHRIST YOU SEE JESUS WAS NOT A NORMAL HUMAN BEING. HERE HAS NEVER BEEN ANOTHER MAN LIKE JESUS. HE WAS NOT MAN RAISED TO THE HIGHEST DEGREE. HE WAS A MAN IN A CLASS BY HIMSELF. HE IS THE UNIQUE SON OF GOD.

2. IS THERE ANY DIFFERENCE BETWEEN US AND JESUS? ARMSTRONG SAYS THIS: "THE ONLY DIFFERENCE BETWEEN JESUS AND AN OTHER HUMAN IS THAT HE WAS CONCEIVED OF THE HOLY

SPIRIT. HE OBEYED GOD'S LAWS FROM BIRTH AND NEVER HAD TO GO THROUGH THE PROCESS OF REPENTING OF GOING THE WRONG WAY, OF UNLEARNING WRONG IDEAS AND HABITS AND GRADUALLY LEARNING TO EXERCISE HIS WILL TO DO RIGHT CONTINUALLY." IN OTHER WORDS THE ONLY DIFFERENCE BETWEEN US AND JESUS IS HIS BEGINNING. HE JUST HAD A HEAD START ON THE REST OF US BUT THERE IS NO REASON WHY WE CANNOT CATCH UP. YOU SEE JESUS WAS ABLE TO OBEY GOD'S LAW FROM BIRTH BUT IT WAS IN KEEPING THIS LAW THAT ENABLED HIM TO BECOME OUR SO-CALLED SAVIOR. LISTEN AGAIN TO WHAT HE SAYS ABOUT THE LORD JESUS. "HE BECAME PERFECT THROUGH THE TRIALS AND TESTS OF HUMAN EXPERIENCE. HE KEPT GOD'S COMMANDMENTS PERFECTLY AND DEVELOPED THE PERFECTION OF SPIRITUAL CHARACTER WHICH ENABLED HIM TO BECOME OUR SAVIOR AND ELDER BROTHER." NOW AGAIN MR. ARMSTRONG HAS PUT THE CART BEFORE THE HORSE. JESUS DID NOT BECOME PERFECT THROUGH THE TRIALS AND TESTS OF HUMAN EXPERIENCE. RATHER JESUS CAME THROUGH THE TRIALS PERFECT. BUT I WANT YOU TO SEE HOW CLOSELY HERBERT ARMSTRONG FLIRTS WITH THE TRUTH. MUCH OF WHAT HE SAYS WITHOUT CLOSE EXAMINATION SOUNDS ALRIGHT AND WOULD PASS AS FAIRLY ORTHODOX TEACHING. BUT HE IS SO CLOSE AND YET SO FAR AWAY. THERE IS ENOUGH PLAIN ERROR IN THIS PLAIN TRUTH TO SEND A MAN TO HELL.

3. LISTEN TO WHAT HE SAYS ABOUT THE RESURRECTION OF THE LORD. "NOW NOTE CAREFULLY GOD THE THE SAME BODY WHICH HAD DIED. THAT IS HE DOES INTO BELIEVE THAT THE LITERAL PHYSICAL BODY OF JESUS WAS RAISED FROM THE DEAD. NOW AGAIN THINK ABOUT THE JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES. THEY DO NOT BELIEVE IN THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS. THEY BELIEVE HE CAME TO LIFE AS A SPIRIT BEING. LISTEN AGAIN TO MR. ARMSTRONG. HE RESURRECTED BODY WAS NO LONGER HUMAN. IT WAS THE CHRIST RESURRECTED IMMORTAL ONCE AGAIN CHANGED. HE WAS CONVERTED INTO IMMORTALITY AND HE IS ALIVE FOREVERMORE." THAT IS IMMORTALITY IS EQUATED WITH PURE SPIRIT. JESUS AFTER THE RESURRECTION WAS A SPIRITUAL SON OF GOD, A SPIRITUALLY DIVINE BEING AND THE BODY JUST SIMPLY DISAPPEARED. IN OTHER WORDS WHEN JESUS CAME TO THIS EARTH HE TOOK A HUMAN BODY AND WHEN JESUS WAS RESURRECTED HE LEFT THAT HUMAN BODY BEHIND. NEW THE ONLY THING WRONG WITH THAT TEACHING IS IT IS JUST DEAD WRONG. AS A MATTER OF FACT, YOU KNEW WE'VE SAID ALL ALONG THAT IF YOU ARE WRONG ABOUT JESUS IT DOESN'T MATTER WHAT ELSE YOU ARE RIGHT ABOUT. WELL, LET ME GO AHEAD AND SAY FURTHER. IF YOU ARE WRONG ABOUT THE RESURRECTION THEN NO MATTER WHAT ELSE YOU BELIEVE

ABOUT JESUS YOU ARE WRONG ABOUT JESUS. FRIEND A NON-RESURRECTED JESUS ISN'T WORTH A HALF A HALLELUJAH OF TAKING YOU TO HEAVEN. PAUL SAID, IF JESUS CHRIST HAS NOT BEEN RAISED FROM THE DEAD WE ARE OF ALL MEN MOST MISERABLE. THE GOSPEL IS INSTANTLY TURNED NOT INTO GOOD NEWS BUT INTO A BAD BAD JOKE.

III. THE NATURE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

1. IT IS TO BE NOTED THAT WITH HIS DOCTRINE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT ARMSTRONG UNEQUIVOCALLY DENIES THE TRINITY AS WELL AS THE PERSONALITY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. HE SAYS, "THE HOLY SPIRIT IS THE VERY POWER OF GOD. IT EXPRESSES THE UNIFIED CREATIVE WILL OF THE GOD FAMILY." NOW EXCEPT FOR THAT LITTLE PREPOSITION IT WHICH BECOMES A BIG WORD IF YOU USE IT TO DESCRIBE THE HOLY SPIRIT HE IS QUITE CORRECT IN SAYING THAT THE HOLY SPIRIT IS THE VERY POWER OF GOD. BUT THE HOLY SPIRIT IS MUCH MORE THAN THAT. LISTEN AGAIN TO WHAT HE SAYS. "GOD'S HOLY SPIRIT IS HIS LIFE. IT IMPARTS HIS LIFE TO YOU. BUT THE THEOLOGIAN AND HIGHER CRITICS HAVE BLINDLY ACCEPTED THE HERETICAL FALSE DOCTRINE INTRODUCED BY PAGAN FALSE PROPHETS I'VE STEPPED IN THAT THE HOLY SPIRIT IS A THIRD PERSON. THE HERESY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. THIS LIMITS GOD TO 3 PERSONS. OF COURSE HE DOESN'T WANT GOD LIMITED TO 3 PERSONS BECAUSE HE WANTS TO BECOME GOD AND HE WANTS YOU TO BECOME GOD. AGAIN "THE HOLY SPIRIT IS NET A THIRD PERSON OF THE GODHEAD AS TAUGHT BY THE PAGAN "TRINITY IDEA." LIKE THE JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES HE DENIES THE PERSONALITY AND THEREFORE THE DEITY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, LET ME JUST SAY THAT JUST AS THE FATHER AND SON GO TOGETHER LIKE LOVE AND MARRIAGE THE HOLY SPIRIT GOES TOGETHER WITH THE SON AND THE FATHER LIKE A HORSE AND CARRIAGE. YOU DENY THE SPIRIT, YOU DENY GOD THE SON AND YOU DENY GOD THE FATHER.

IV. THE NATURE OF SALVATION

1. YOU CAN PUT IT DOWN THAT WHEN YOU ARE WRONG ABOUT JESUS, WRONG ABOUT THE HOLY SPIRIT, WRONG ABOUT THE RESURRECTION, THERE'S NO WAY IN THE WORLD YOU CAN BE RIGHT ABOUT SALVATION. ARMSTRONG SAYS "SALVATION THEN IS A PROCESS. BUT HOW THE GOD OF THIS WORLD WOULD BLIND YOUR EYES TO THAT. HE TRIES TO DECEIVE YOU INTO THINKING THAT ALL THERE IS TO IT IS JUST ACCEPTING CHRIST WITH NO WORKS. AND PRESTO CHANGO YOU ARE PRONOUNCED SAVED." I DON'T KNOW THAT PRESTO CHANGO IS THE RIGHT WORD. I THINK GLORY

HALLELUJAH WOULD BE MUCH BETTER. BUT THE WORD OF GOD DOES SAY "THAT IF ANY MAN BE IN CHRIST, HE IS (THAT IS IMMEDIATELY) A NEW CREATION." HE GOES ON TO SAY, "BUT THE BIBLE SAYS THAT NONE IS YET SAVED. PEOPLE HAVE BEEN TAUGHT FALSELY THAT CHRIST COMPLETED THE PLAN OF SALVATION ON THE CROSS. WHEN ACTUALLY IT WAS BEGUN THERE." OF COURSE THAT MAKES JESUS A LIAR BECAUSE JESUS HIMSELF SAID, "IT IS FINISHED. HE GOES ON TO SAY, "THE POPULAR DENOMINATIONS HAVE TAUGHT 'JUST BELIEVE THAT IS ALL THERE IS TO IT. BELIEVE ON THE LORD JESUS CHRIST AND YOU ARE IN THAT INSTANCE SAVED.'" WELL, NOT ONLY IS THAT WHAT I BELIEVE THAT IS EXACTLY WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS, "THAT TEACHING IS FALSE AND BECAUSE OF DECEPTION, BECAUSE THE TRUE GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST HAS BEEN BLOTTED OUT LOW THESE 1900 YEARS BY THE PREACHING OF A FALSE GOSPEL ABOUT THE PERSON OF CHRIST AND OFTEN A FALSE CHRIST AT THAT MILLIONS TODAY WORSHIP CHRIST AND ALL IN VAIN." SO FOR 1900 YEARS GOD HAS LED AROUND AND LET MANKIND PREACH A FALSE GOSPEL.

2. WELL, IF YOU ARE NOT SAVED BY FAITH JUST EXACTLY HOW ARE YOU SAVED? WELL, HE SAID, "THAT OBEDIENCE TO GOD'S SPIRITUAL LAWS ARE SUMMED UP IN THE COMMANDMENTS AND THAT THIS IS NECESSARY FOR SALVATION." SURPRISE, SURPRISE. HIS IS A SALVATION BY WORKS. I HAVE SAID REPEATEDLY THAT ONE OF THE MARKS OF EVERY CULT IS IF YOU WILL EXAMINE THEIR TEACHING CLOSELY YOU SPELL SALVATION NOT DONE AS WE SPELL IT BUT DO. YOU MUST WORK TO BE SAVED. WELL, HOW DOES THE BLOOD OF JESUS, THE PRECIOUS BLOOD OF THE LORD, FIT INTO ALL OF THIS? WELL, HE SAYS AGAIN, "THE BLOOD OF CHRIST DOES NOT FINALLY SAVE ANY MAN. THE DEATH OF CHRIST MERELY PAID THE PENALTY OF SIN IN OUR STEAD. IT WIPES THE SLATE CLEAN OF PASS SIN. IT SAVES US MERELY FROM THE DEATH PENALTY. IT REMOVES THAT WHICH SEPARATED US FROM GOD AND RECONCILES US TO GOD." AGAIN HE SAYS, "ACCEPTANCE OF CHRIST CLEANSSES FROM PASS SINS BUT JUSTIFICATION WILL BE GIVEN ONLY ON CONDITION THAT THE LAW IS KEPT. IN OTHER WORDS, A PERSON WHO RECEIVES CHRIST IS CLEANSSED FROM HIS PAST BUT HE IS ON PROBATION IN THE PRESENT. EVEN THOUGH YOU'VE BEEN SAVED, IF YOU DON'T BE A GOOD LITTLE BOY THE DEVIL WILL SURELY GET YOU. "IT IS ONLY THOSE WHO ARE DOING THIS CHRISTIAN SPIRIT BEGOTTEN LIFE HAVE GROWN IN KNOWLEDGE AND GRACE, HAVE OVERCOME, HAVE DEVELOPED SPIRITUALLY, DONE THE WORKS OF CHRIST

AND ENDURED UNTO THE END WHO SHALL FINALLY BE GIVEN IMMORTALITY." NOW I BELIEVE THAT ANY SAVED PERSON IS GOING TO SHOW HIS SALVATION IN HIS LIFE BUT ALSO BELIEVE THAT WORKS ARE NOT THE ROOT OF SALVATION. THEY ARE BUT THE FRUIT OF SALVATION. HOW LISTEN TO HIS CONCLUSION ON THE MATTER OF SALVATION. CHRIST'S DEATH PAID THE PENALTY OF YOUR GUILTY PAST. IT RECONCILED YOU TO GOD GAVE YOU ACCESS DIRECTLY TO GOD BUT IT DID NOT GIVE YOU ETERNAL LIFE. DID NOT YET SAVE YOU. SO YOU NEED TO REALIZE THAT IF YOU ARE IN ARMSTRONG'S CAMP THAT EVEN THOUGH YOU HAVE COMMITTED YOUR LIFE TO CHRIST, REPENTED OF YOUR SINS, BY FAITH TRUSTED HIM AND YOU DO NOT NOW HAVE ETERNAL LIFE. WELL, YOU COULD ALMOST QUOTE THE ENTIRE BIBLE IN REFUTATION OF THAT. LET ME JUST QUOTE ONE VERSE. JESUS SAID IN JOHN 5:24, "TRULY, TRULY I SAY TO YOU. HE WHO HEARS MY WORD AND BELIEVES HIM WHO SENT ME HAS ETERNAL LIFE AND DOES NOT COME INTO JUDGEMENT BUT HAS PASSED OUT OF DEATH INTO LIFE." WHAT IS SO TRAGIC ABOUT THIS IS THERE ARE MANY WELL MEANING PEOPLE WHO NOT ONLY FOLLOW THE TEACHING OF ARMSTRONG AND GIVE MONEY TO HIS CHURCH BUT THEY HONESTLY BELIEVE THAT THEY ARE ON THE RIGHT ROAD TO HEAVEN. AND WHAT IS MORE MANY UNSUSPECTING CHRISTIANS, FUNDAMENTALIST CHRISTIANS ARE GIVING THEIR TITHES AND OFFERINGS TO THIS CHURCH.

V. THE NATURE OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

ARMSTRONG HAS A TRULY FASCINATING VIEW OF THE ROLE OF THE OLD TESTAMENT AND ITS VARIOUS LAWS AND CEREMONIES AND HOW THEY RELATE TODAY TO THE CHRISTIAN'S LIFE. "PASSOVER, THE DAYS OF UNLEAVEN BREAD, PENTECOST, AND THE HOLY DAYS GOD HAD ORDAINED FOREVER WERE ALL OBSERVED BY JESUS. THE NEW TESTAMENT REVEALS THAT JESUS, THE APOSTLES AND THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH BOTH JEWISH AND GENTILE BOTH OBSERVED GOD'S SABBATH AND GOD'S FESTIVALS WEEKLY AND ANNUALLY." NOW WHAT HE IS SAYING IS IS THAT NOT ONLY WAS IT GOOD FOR THE OLD TESTAMENT. IT WAS GOOD FOR THE NEW TESTAMENT AS WELL. IT WAS A CONTINUED PRACTICE AND WE ARE TO KEEP MOSES' OLD TESTAMENT LAWS JUST AS RIGOROUSLY AS DID MOSES AND THE LEVITES AND AS THE PHARISEES ALSO DEMANDED. NOW SO SERIOUSLY DOES HE TAKE THESE MATTERS THAT HE SAYS JUST ABOUT THE SABBATH, "TO BREAK GOD'S HOLY

SABBATH IS SIN AND THE PENALTY IS ETERNAL DEATH.” FRIEND, THE ONLY SIN WHICH IS GUILTY OF ETERNAL DEATH IS THE SIN OF UNBELIEF IN THE LORD JESUS CHRIST. HE DEMANDS THAT THE DIETARY REGULATIONS OF LEV. 11 AND DUET. ARE MANDATORY AS WELL AND ARE TO BE KEPT THOUGH INCIDENTALLY SMOKING IS A SIN, DRINKING ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES IS NOT A SIN. HE INTERPRETS THE SECOND COMMANDMENT WHICH RELATES TO THE WORSHIPPING OF GRAVEN IMAGES AS EXCLUDING ALL IDOLATROUS CHURCH FESTIVALS SUCH AS CHRISTMAS, EASTER, NEW YEAR’S DAY, EVEN BIRTHDAYS. DON’T EVER WISH A MEMBER OF THE WORLDWIDE CHUCH OF GOD MERRY CHRISTMAS OR HAPPY BIRTHDAY. NOW WHO DOES ALL OF THAT REMIND YOU OF. WELL, MUCH OF IT REMINDS US AS WE WILL SEE OF THE SEVENTH DAY ADVENTISTS PARTICULARLY ON THEIR EMPHASIS OF THE SABBATH. SUFFICE TO SAY TO ALL OF THIS THAT WE KNOW WHY PAUL SAID IN COLOSSIANS 2:16FF, “THEREFOR LET NO ONE ACT AS YOUR JUDGE IN REGARD TO FOOD OR DRINK OR IN RESPECT TO A FESTIVAL OR A NEW MOON OR A SABBATH DAY THINGS WHICH ARE A MERE SHADOW OF WHAT IS TO COME BUT THE SUBSTANCE BELONGS TO CHRIST.”

2. AGAIN WE SEE A LITTLE PINCH OF CHRISTIAN SCIENTIST IN ALL OF THIS CONCOCTION OF BELIEF, FOR ARMSTRONG SAYS, “SICKNESS IS ONLY THE PENALTY OF PHYSICAL TRANSGRESSION AND WHENEVER ONE IS SICK HE IS PAYING THE PENALTY. HEALING IS NOTHING MORE OR LESS THAN THE FORGIVENESS OF SIN. GOD IS THE ONLY REAL PHYSICIAN (TO WHICH I WOULD AGREE) SCRIPTURE LABELS OTHER MODES OF HEALING IDOLATRY. MEDICINE HAS A PAGAN ORIGIN.” AS YOU CAN SEE IT IS SO DIFFICULT TO GET A HANDLE ON ARMSTRONGISM BECAUSE AS I SAID BEFORE IT IS JUST A POTPOURRI OF DIFFERENT TEACHINGS AND DOCTRINES TAKEN FROM JUST ABOUT EVERYWHERE.

VI. BRITISH-ISRAELISM

YOU CANNOT REALLY FAIRLY DEAL WITH ARMSTRONGISM UNLESS YOU TOUCH ON HIS STRONG EMPHASIS ON THE PLACE OF AMERICA IN THE PROPHETIC PLAN OF GOD. HE TEACHES A DOCTRINE WIDELY KNOWN AS BRITISH-ISRAELISM IS THAT THE ANGLO SAXON COUNTRIES OF BRITAIN AND THE UNITED STATES RE IN REALITY THE 10 LOST TRIBES OF ISRAEL. GREAT BRITIAN IS THE TRIBE OF EPHRAIM AND THE UNITED STATES IS THE TRIBE OF MANASSEH. SO ALL OF THE OLD TESTAMENT PROPHECIES RELATED TO ISRAEL ARE NI

REALITY MEANT TO BE FOR GREAT BRITIAN AND THE UNITED STATES. HE BELIEVES THAT THE TRONE OF ENGLAND IS THE THRONE OF DAVID. AND IT IS JUST A FASCINATING WAY THAT THIS SUPPOSEDLY CAME ABOUT. UNDERNEATH THE THRONE OF THE QUEEN OF ENGLAND IN WESMINSTER ABBY IS A STONE CALLED THE STONE OF SCONE. I REALLY DON’T KNOW WHAT THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THAT STONE IS BUT ACCORDING TO ARMSTRONG THIS STONE WAS THE STONE USED BY JACOB AS A PILLOW AT BETHEL. NOW AS FASCINATING AS THAT IS HOW DO YOU THINK THE STONE WOUND UP IN WESTMINSTER ABBY. WELL, SOMEHOW OR OTHER THE STONE WAS BROUGHT UNDER THE THE DAUGHTER OF THE PROPHET ZEDDECIAH TO IRELAND HE STOPPED OFF IN ENGLAND AND LEFT THIS STONE. NOW THE UPSHOT OF ALL OF THIS IS SIMPLY THAT QUEEN ELIZABETH IS IN REALITY THE QUEEN OF ISRAEL.

CONCLUSION:

IN MANY WAYS I HAVE BARELY SCRAPED THE SURFACE AT THE FASCINATING FALSE DO TRINE BEING PERPETRATED BY THIS SERVANT OF SATAN. I THINK BACK TO THE TEXT THAT WE READ ABOUT WOLVES IN SHEEP’S CLOTHING. AND I THOUGHT ABOUT ENDERA GHANDI. I WAS READING ABOUT HER UNFORTUNATE DEATH AND HOW HER ASSASSIN WAS FOR 8 YEARS ONE OF HER MOST TRUSTED FRIENDS. HE EVEN WAS ENTRUSTED WITH THE CARE OF HER GRAND CHILDREN AND WOULD OFTEN DRIVE THEM TO SCHOOL. AND I APPLIED THAT TO CULTS IN GENERAL AND TO HERBERT ARMSTRONG IN PARTICULAR. HE LOOKS SO NEAT AND SPEAKS SO AUTHORITATIVELY AND SEEMS SO SINCERE AND IS SO DEFT AND CLEVER AT SKIRTING THE TRUTH WHILE TEACHING A LIE. YET, HIIS FRIENDLY FACE AND HIS SMOOTH LIPS ARE THE DEVIL’S TOOLS USED TO DEAL OUT FALSE AND DAMNING DOCTRINE TO MILLIONS OF PEOPLE AROUND THIS WORLD.

IT SHOULD REMIND US ONCE AGAIN THAT WE OUGHT TO BE ABOUT THE BUSINESS DAY BY DAY, WEEK BY WEEK, MONTH BY MONTH, YEAR BY YEAR JUST AS GOD LEADS US IN DROPPING THE SEEDS OF THE REAL TRUTH TO ALL WHO WANT TO HEAR IT. THE PLAIN TRUTH IS THAT THE PLAIN TRUTH IS NOT THE PLAIN TRUTH IT IS A FABRICATION. IT IS FALSE DOCTRINE. IT IS A LIE. AND IT NEEDS TO BE OVERSOWN WITH THE TRUTH OF THE GOSPEL OF JESUS AND THE WORD OF GOD.

MATTHEW 7:28-29

“THE WORLD’S GREATEST TEACHER”

INTRODUCTION

1. HE NEVER WROTE A BOOK, BUT THOUSANDS HAVE BEEN WRITTEN ABOUT HIM. HE NEVER GOT A FORMAL EDUCATION, BUT SCHOOLS HAVE BEEN BUILT TO LEARN ABOUT HIM. HE NEVER WROTE A SONG, BUT SOME OF THE GREATEST WORKS OF BACH AND BEETHOVEN WERE WRITTEN IN HIS HONOR. HE NEVER FOUNDED AN EMPIRE, BUT HAS HAD THROUGH THE AGES HUNDREDS OF MILLIONS OF FOLLOWERS.

2. SOMEONE HAS WRITTEN ABOUT JESUS THESE WORDS, “I AM FAR WITHIN THE MARK WHEN I SAY THAT ALL THE ARMIES THAT EVER MARCHED AND ALL THE NAVIES THAT EVER WERE BUILT AND ALL THE PARLIMENTS THAT EVER SAT AND ALL THE KINGS THAT EVER REIGNED PUT TOGETHER HAVE NOT AFFECTED THE LIFE OF MAN UPON THIS EARTH AS HAS THAT ONE SOLITARY LIFE.”

3. ANYBODY AND EVERYBODY WHO GOT WITHIN A COUNTRY MILE OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST WAS FOREVER AFFECTED. YOU COULD NOT SIT ON THE FENCE WITH JESUS. YOU EITHER LOVED HIM OR YOU HATED HIM. YOU EITHER FOLLOWED HIM OR YOU REJECTED HIM. YOU WERE EITHER AMAZED AT HIM OR YOU WERE ANGRY AT HIM. BUT EITHER WAY YOU HAD TO MAKE UP YOUR MIND ABOUT JESUS. JESUS HAD JUST FINISHED THE GREATEST SERMON EVER PREACHED; THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT; AND MATTHEW TELLS US IN THESE TWO VERSES OF SCRIPTURE THAT THERE WAS AN AWE THAT JUST FELL OVER THE CROWD, AND WITH A MIGHTY HUSH THEY COULD NOT BELIEVE THE WISDOM AND THE POWER AND THE TRUTH AND THE BRILLIANCY OF THIS TEACHER CALLED JESUS CHRIST. HE WAS THE PROFESSOR THAT EVERYBODY WOULD HAVE WANTED TO HEAR. HE WAS THE GREAT PREACHER THAT EVERYONE WOULD HAVE FLOCKED TO LISTEN TO. WHAT WAS IT THAT WAS SO WONDERFULLY BEAUTIFUL ABOUT THE TEACHINGS OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST? WHAT WAS IT THAT INSPIRED SUCH AWE AND SUCH WHO RABBI OR OR TEACHER. LET US NOTICE HOW THESE PEOPLE RESPONDED TO THE TEACHING AND THE PREACHING OF JESUS CHRIST. WE CAN LEARN WHAT A PREACHING POWERFUL PREACHER AND

TEACHER THAT JESUS WAS BY THESE TWO LITTLE VERSES IN THE BIBLE:

I. THE AMAZED RESPONSE TO HIS TEACHING

MATTHEW SAYS THAT THE CROWDS WERE AMAZED AT HIS TEACHING. NOW THE WORD “ASTONISHED” LITERALLY MEANS “ALMOST DRIVEN OUT OF ONE’S MIND.” (LOOK AT MARK 1:22; MARK 6:2, ACTS 13:12.) WHAT WAS IT THAT WAS SO AMAZING ABOUT THE TEACHING OF JESUS? WELL TWO THINGS:

A. INSIGHT

THEY WERE AMAZED AT THE FRESHNESS OF THE TEACHING OF JESUS AND HOW HE MADE THE SCRIPTURES COME ALIVE. FOR CENTURIES THEY HAD SEEN THROUGH A GLASS DARKLY, BUT JESUS HAD ALLOWED THE FULL LIGHT OF THE WISDOM OF GOD TO SHINE THROUGH THE DOOR OF THE SCRIPTURES, HE TAUGHT TRUTHS TOTALLY UNHEARD OF IN THAT DAY. JUST THINK ABOUT SOME THINGS THAT HE TEACHES US IN THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT:

1. SIN IS MORE THAN SKIN DEEP. (5:21-30)

HE TAUGHT THE FULL FILTH AND THE DEEP DANGER OF SIN. SIN IS MORE THAN SOMETHING YOU DO--IT IS SOMETHING YOU ARE. IT IS HARBORED IN THE HEART. IT IS NOT JUST AN ACTION--IT IS AN ATTITUDE. IT IS NOT SOMETHING MERELY EXTERNAL--IT IS SOMETHING DEEPLY INTERNAL, AND JESUS HAS SHOWN THROUGH THIS TEACHING THAT ALL HAD SINNED, YES THE SCRIBES, YES THE PHARISEES, YES THE SADDUCEES. ALL HAD SINNED AND COME SHORT OF THE GLORY OF GOD.

2. SALVATION IS FOUND ONLY IN JESUS. (7:21-23)

JESUS SAYS THAT GOING TO HEAVEN IS GOING TO DEPEND SOLELY ON ONE’S RESPONSE TO HIS TEACHINGS. HE ASSUMED THAT PEOPLE WOULD ADDRESS HIM AS LORD ON THE DAY OF JUDGMENT. PEOPLE WOULD BE LOOKING TO HIM AS THEIR WAY INTO HEAVEN. IT WAS AN AMAZING THING THAT JESUS WAS TEACHING TO A BUNCH OF RELIGIOUS, PIOUS, HARDWORKING JEWS. IT IS NOT A MATTER OF MONEY, IT IS NOT A MATTER OF MORALITY, IT IS NOT A MATTER OF MANNERS, IT IS NOT A MATTER OF YOUR STANDING IN THE CHURCH, IT IS NOT A MATTER OF YOUR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION. GOING TO HEAVEN IS SOLELY DEPENDENT UPON YOUR PERSONAL, PRIVATE RELATIONSHIP TO THE LORD JESUS CHRIST.

3. SERVICE IS THE MARK OF A TRUE CHILD

IN ONE SWEEP OF HIS HAND JESUS TORE ASIDE CENTURIES OF TRADITION, THE TEACHINGS OF MY SAYINGS. AND THIS IS THE SECRET OF BEING A REAL CHILD OF GOD. (HE ONLY WAY A MAN CAN GO TO HEAVEN S BY HEARING AND HEEDING THE WORDS OF THE LORD JEWS CHRIST. YOU SEE WHAT AMAZED THE CROWD WAS THIS:

JESUS HAD SIMPLY TAUGHT THEM THAT A MAN MAY GO TO HEAVEN WITHOUT HEALTH, WITHOUT FAME, WITHOUT GREAT LEARNING, WITHOUT A GREAT NAME, WITHOUT BIG EARNINGS, WITHOUT CULTURE, AND WITHOUT FRIENDS, WITHOUT A THOUSAND OTHER THINGS. BUT A MAN CAN NEVER GO TO HEAVEN WITHOUT JESUS.

B. IMPLICATIONS

NOT ONLY WERE THEY AMAZED AT THE INSIGHT OF HIS TEACHING, THEY WERE AMAZED AT THE IMPLICATIONS OF HIS TEACHING. YOU SEE WHAT JESUS HAD REALLY SAID IN THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT WAS THIS: HE HAD SAID FIRST OF ALL THAT HE WAS THE CHRIST. LOOK AT MATTHEW 5:17, JESUS IMPLIED THAT HE WOULD BE TOTALLY SINLESS IN FULFILLING THE LAW AND, WOULD FULFILL THE PROPHECY OF THE OLD TESTAMENT. NOW EVERY BELIEVING JEW KNEW THAT THE MESSIAH HAD TO FULFILL EVERY SINGLE PROPHECY OF THE OLD TESTAMENT, LIKEWISE, HE HAD TO FULFILL EVERY SINGLE LAW, THAT THE MESSIAH HAD TO FULFILL EVERY SINGLE PROPHECY OF THE OLD TESTAMENT. LIKEWISE, HE HAD TO FULFILL EVERY SINGLE LAW, THAT THE MESSIAH WOULD BE A PERFECT MESSIAH. SO WHEN JESUS SAID I HAVE COME TO FULFILL THE LAW, INDEED HAVE COME TO FULFILL EVEN THE SMALLEST LETTER AND STROKE. HE WAS SIMPLY SAYING, I AM THE CHRIST, I AM THE MESSIAH PROMISED OF GOD.

THEN HE WAS ALSO CLAIMING TO BE LORD. NOT ONLY CHRIST, BUT LORD. YOU SEE, YOU CANNOT ACCEPT JESUS AS TEACHER IF YOU DO NOT ACCEPT HIM AS LORD BECAUSE ONE OF THE THINGS THAT JESUS YOU TAUGHT WAS THAT HE WAS THE LORD. JOHN 13:13, "YOU CALL ME TEACHER AND LORD, AND YOU ARE RIGHT FOR SO I AM." HE SAYS YOU ARE NOT ONLY TO SUBMIT YOURSELVES TO MY TEACHING, YO ARE TO SUBMIT YOURSELF TO ME. THAT IS WHAT SEPARATES JESUS AS A TEACHER FROM EVERY OTHER TEACHER WHO HAS EVER LIVED,

YOU SEE A TEACHER WANTS YOU TO ACCEPT HIS BELIEFS, BUT A LORD WANTS YOU TO ACCEPT HIM.

THEN, NOT ONLY DID JESUS TEACH HE WAS THE CHRIST, AND NOT ONLY DID JESUS; TEACH HE WAS THE LORD, JESUS TAUGHT THAT HE WAS GOD. YOU SEE EVERYONE KNEW THAT ONLY GOD COULD TEACH LIKE THIS MAN TAUGHT. ONLY GOD COULD TEACH WITH THE WISDOM AND THE INSIGHT AND THE BRILLIANCY WITH WHICH JESUS TAUGHT, LOOK AT CHAPTER 5:11 AND 12, JESUS' POINT HERE WAS THIS, THE PROPHETS WERE PERSECUTED FOR GOD'S SAKE., BUT THE PROPHETS TO COME AFTER JESUS WILL BE PERSECUTED FOR WHOM? FOR JESUS' SAKE, AND 0 JESUS WAS EQUATING HIMSELF TO GOD.

II. THE AUTHORITATIVE RING TO HIS TEACHING.

THEY WERE AMAZED AT HIS AUTHORITY. FOR UNLIKE THE SCRIBES WHO QUOTED OTHER AUTHORITIES AND RELIED ON OTHER PEOPLES' OPINIONS, JESUS SIMPLY LET HIS WORDS STAND ON THEIR OWN TWO FEET. NOW TWO THINGS NEED TO BE SAID HERE:

FIRST, THE MAJOR DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE SCRIBES AND JESUS WAS THAT THE SCRIBES WE DEVOTED TO TRADITION WHILE JESUS WAS DEVOTED TO THE TRUTH. NOTHING KILLS GROWTH IN LEARNING OR LIVING LIKE TRADITION. SOMEONE HAS SAID THAT THE SEVEN LAST WORDS OF A DYING CHURCH ARE, "WE'VE NEVER DONE IT THAT WAY BEFORE." SOMETIMES YOU WILL HEAR SOMEONE SAY, "THIS IS NOT THE WAY WE HAVE ALWAYS BELIEVED." BUT YOU SEE, JESUS WAS NOT INTERESTED IN TRADITION, JESUS WAS INTERESTED IN THE TRUTH, AND WHENEVER A MAN PEAKS THE TRUTH NO MATTER WHAT AREA HE SPEAKS IN, HE CAN ALWAYS SPEAK WITH AUTHORITY.

SECOND, HE SPOKE WITH AUTHORITY BECAUSE HE BASED HIS TEACHINGS ON THE WORD OF GOD. ANYBODY CAN SPEAK WITH AUTHORITY, CONFIDENCE, AND CERTAINTY IF HE BASES WHAT HE SAYS ON THE WORD OF GOD. THE FAMED ATHEIST ROBERT INGERSOLL MADE IT A POINT TO GO AND HEAR D. L. MOODY EVERY TIME HE WAS IN TOWN TO PREACH. SOMEONE ASKED HIM IF HE BELIEVED IN THE BIBLE, AND HE SAID OF COURSE NOT. SOMEONE SAID DO YOU BELIEVE WHAT D.L. MOODY PREACHES,

AND HE SAID ABSOLUTELY NOT. THEY SAID, THEN WHY IS IT THAT YOU ALWAYS GO TO HEAR HIM PREACH WHEN HE COMES TO TOWN, AND HE SAID IT IS BECAUSE MOODY BELIEVES WHAT HE PREACHES. THINK ABOUT THE TREMENDOUS AUTHORITY THAT JESUS HAD. NO OTHER TEACHER HAD THE AUTHORITY THAT JESUS POSSESSED.

1. JESUS HAD AUTHORITY OVER DEMONS--MARK 1:25-27.
2. _ JESUS HAD AUTHORITY OVER SIN-- MARK 2:5-7.
3. _ JESUS HAD AUTHORITY OVER SICKNESS--MARK 2:11-12.
4. _ JESUS HAD AUTHORITY OVER THE LAW--MATTHEW 5:21.
5. _ JESUS HAD AUTHORITY OVER DEATH--JOHN 11:37-44.

III. THE ACTUAL RESULT OF HIS TEACHING.

MATTHEW SAYS THAT THEY WERE ASTONISHED AND AMAZED, BUT THAT WAS AS FAR AS IT WENT. NOW THERE ARE FOUR WAYS THAT SOMEONE CAN REACT TO THE TEACHINGS OF JESUS CHRIST:

A. AMAZEMENT

LIKE THE CROWD, MANY PEOPLE HEAR THE PREACHING OF JESUS, AND HEAR THE WORDS OF JESUS, AND THEY MARVEL AT IT, AND THEY ARE AMAZED AT IT. AND THEY DISCUSS IT, AND THEN THEY JUST DROP IT CONTINUING TO LIVE LIFE THE SAME WAY AS BEFORE.

B. AGREEMENT

MANY PEOPLE AGREE WITH THE TEACHINGS OF JESUS. YOU HEAR PEOPLE SAY QUITE FREQUENTLY, "OH BELIEVE WE OUGHT TO LIVE UP TO THE TEN COMMANDMENTS OR I BELIEVE WE OUGHT TO LIVE UP TO THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT AND I BELIEVE THAT IF EVERYBODY JUST FOLLOWED THE TEACHINGS OF JESUS, THIS WORLD WOULD BE A BETTER PLACE IN WHICH TO LIVE." BUT MAY I SAY TO YOU THAT AMAZEMENT IS NOT ENOUGH, AND AGREEMENT IS NOT ENOUGH.

C. ANTAGONISM

THERE ARE THOSE WHO DISAGREE WITH JESUS AND CRITICIZE JESUS. THEY SAY THAT JESUS WAS TOO

IDEALISTIC. THAT HIS IDEAS WON'T WORK. THAT THEIR WAY IS A BETTER WAY. THE COMMUNIST IS DEEPLY ANTAGONISTIC TO THE TEACHINGS OF JESUS. CAN YOU IMAGINE THE COMMUNIST SAYING THAT THEY OUGHT TO LOVE THEIR ENEMIES AND PRAY FOR THEM? CAN YOU IMAGINE THE COMMUNIST TURNING THE OTHER CHEEK, CAN YOU IMAGINE THE PLAYBOY SAYING, YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY? CAN YOU IMAGINE THE LAWYERS SAYING IF ANYONE WANTS TO SUE YOU AND TAKE YOUR SHIRT, LET HIM HAVE YOUR COAT ALSO? NO THERE ARE MANY PEOPLE WHO ARE ANTAGONISTIC TO THE TEACHINGS OF JESUS.

D. ACCEPTANCE

YOU CAN ACCEPT BOTH THE TEACHINGS AND THE TEACHERS. YOU CAN ACCEPT JESUS CHRIST AS TEACHER AND AS LORD AND LET CHRIST CHANGE YOUR LIFE AND MAKE YOU A NEW CREATURE, WHEN A MAN ACCEPTS JESUS AS TEACHER HE MUST ACCEPT HIM AS LORD, AND WHEN A MAN ACCEPTS JESUS AS LORD HE MUST ACCEPT HIM AS TEACHER. NOW WHEN YOU'VE ACCEPTED JESUS AS YOUR TEACHER YOU ARE SAYING TO HIM JESUS, I WANT TO LEARN TO LIVE FROM YOU, BUT WHEN YOU ACCEPT HIM AS LORD YOU ARE SAYING, I WANT TO LIVE HAVE YOU ACCEPTED THIS MASTER-TEACHER? HAS HIS AUTHORITY RUNG THROUGH IN HIS LIFE? WHAT HAS BEES' HE RESULT OF JESUS' TEACHINGS IN YOUR LIFE? IT IS NOT ENOUGH TO HEAR THE TEACHINGS OF JESUS. IT IS NOT ENOUGH TO BE AMAZED AT THE TEACHINGS OF JESUS. IT IS NOT EVEN ENOUGH TO AGREE WITH THE TEACHINGS OF JESUS. YOU MUST ACCEPT THE TEACHINGS OF JESUS AND YOU MUST ACCEPT JESUS WHO WAS THE TEACHER.

