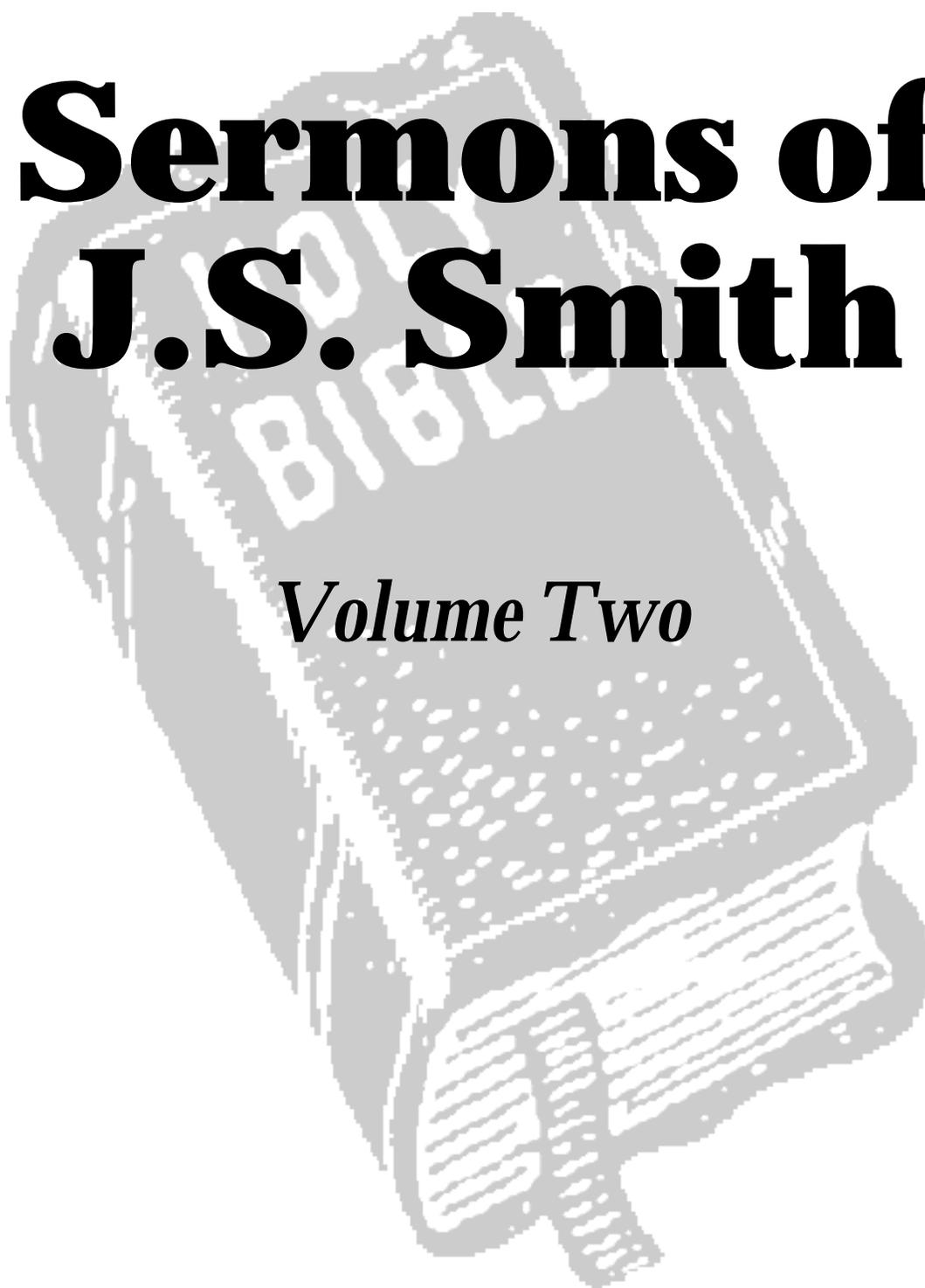


# **Sermons of J.S. Smith**

*Volume Two*





# *Sermons of J.S. Smith*

## Volume Two

*delivered predominately at the  
Wonsley Drive church of Christ in Austin, Texas*

*compiled in January 1999*

*dedicated to the members of the Wonsley Drive church of Christ,  
who allow me to grow among them*



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# Below The Surface (Part One)

by J.S. Smith • delivered 26 June 1994 • Austin, Texas

## Introduction

- i. [Read 2 Corinthians 5:12.]
- ii. The Greek word *prosopo* (προσωπω) rendered appearance in King James is literally face. Thayer's Greek Lexicon describes Paul's use of this particular word as denoting one who glories "...in those things which they simulate in look—piety, love, righteousness—although their heart is devoid of these virtues." Paul's contrast is between those who are good on the surface but not below the surface. They appear good but their heart betrays that appearance.
- iii. The New Testament warns us to do more as Christians than trust appearances. Jesus did more than say he was the son of God—he proved it by fulfilling Old Testament prophecies and doing the will of God. The inspired writings of the New Testament tell us to beware those who appear as angels of light and yet are dark below the surface.
- iv. In order to do this, you must be knowledgeable about the Truth. You cannot expose error unless you know what the truth is.

## Discussion

- I. The Hypocrites Are The Epitome of This As A Desire for the Praise of Men: Matt. 6:1-4
  - A. Motive
    1. refer back to Matthew 5:20
    2. Matthew 5 deals with actions while Matt. 6 deals with motives and attitudes
    3. not a literal trumpet, but figurative of blowing one's own horn as an egotistical person
      - a. they used just as obnoxious methods to draw attention to their good deeds
      - b. as one in our day might call the newspapers before he makes a large charitable donation
    4. these hypocrites sought the praise of men and they received their reward—but could hope for nothing from God
    5. verse 3 points out the private nature of the alms giving
    6. these hypocrites did a good thing in giving to charity, but their attitude was wrong
      - a. it looks great on the face but the heart is all wrong
      - b. one must look below the surface
  - B. Matthew 6:5-8
    1. Pharisees had a habit of standing in a prayerful posture so that others would notice them and be impressed with their piety
      - a. they prayed their private, personal prayers before men to gain notoriety
      - b. it was public opinion and not supplications before God that motivated them
      - c. prayer is not something given to ostentatious displays
    2. they also preferred long and repetitive prayers—more is better?
      - a. like Ephesians who whined for two hours, "Great is Diana!"
      - b. long prayers and sincere, yet repeated words are not forbidden
        1. He prayed all night and with words thrice repeated
        2. he does forbid making the number and length of prayers an object of consideration or a source of trust
      - c. Jesus teaches contrary to the Catholics whose long and repetitive prayers are designed to gain credit with men and God
      - d. even the prayer that follows is a model, not the only prayer to be used—that would be repetition
    3. the hypocrites took a solemn act of prayer and made it an attempt to fulfill egotistical ambition
      - a. the face may have shown piety and sincerity
      - b. but the heart was not in it for anything but notoriety among men
  - C. Practical Atheism
    1. those who claim to be Christians but deny that faith in their lives: 1 John 1:6 and 2:6
    2. these are the most common examples of hypocrisy in the church today

- a. those who claim to be Christians but are anything but Christ-like
  - b. these lack concern for their brethren as they set poor examples and act like distant cousins instead when it comes to the assemblies
  - c. they seem very pious on the face Sunday morning but their heart is elsewhere as are their bodies that night
4. the hypocritical Christian will attend to give the appearance to others that he is Christ-like, but below the surface, they are empty

## II. In Sardis: Revelation 3:1-6

### A. History Should Have Taught The Sardinians a lesson

1. Sardis was a rich and proud capital city in the sixth century B.C.
  - a. it was located upon a spur off a mountain range
  - b. was considered nearly impregnable
2. but in 549 B.C., Cyrus of Persia led his soldiers through the porous rocks of the hillside and conquered Sardis
3. Saris forgot this lesson and was again conquered three hundred years later by the Romans
4. their agony did not end then—an earthquake destroyed much of the city in 17 A.D.
5. due to these things, John feels Sardis should have been able to understand the warning that Jesus would return as a thief in the night

### B. On The Surface

1. it appeared that Sardis did take this warning seriously
2. their reputation among the brotherhood was a positive one
  - a. they had no doctrinal problems like Thyatira had
  - b. they were not suffering tribulation like Smyrna
3. they appeared to be a strong, vital church, a beacon of purity
4. their reputation was respectable and fashionable alive

### C. But, Below The Surface

1. they had no doctrinal problems because they were too dead to seriously consider doctrine
2. they were not suffering tribulation or persecution because they were too inactive in the community to incite any strife or convict any sinners
3. their reputation was a complete lie and falsehood—they were dead spiritually
  - a. it is common in the NT times and since for a church to take on the characteristics and sins of the city in which it is located
  - b. the church at Sardis had apparently fallen prey to this danger
    1. the lethargy and blindness of the city had seeped into the church
    2. the city had been conquered twice because it failed to be alert—to watch
  - c. sin and slothfulness had sapped the very lifeblood out of the church and their religion had become mere formality

### D. It Is Possible To Be Dead While Appearing Alive

1. Paul said a widow who pursues fleshly pleasure is “dead while she lives” (1 Tim. 5:6)
2. the father of the prodigal son rejoiced in the end for his son “was dead and is alive again” (Luke 15:24); Rom. 6:13 and Eph. 2:1-5
3. Sardis was like a wax statue that looks so real and alive and yet has no pulse or thoughts
4. they wore the name Christian and yet God knew they were not like his vital son: 2 Tim. 2:19
  - a. Greek word for iniquity here is *αδικία* (*adikia*) for unrighteousness
  - b. the Christians at Sardis appeared upright on the face, but their heart was not in it
  - c. they went through the motions; visitors would have been fooled but God knew better

### E. An Admonition

1. Wonsley has a solid reputation
2. we must work so that that reputation is based on current fact, not a presumed continuation of history

### III. Test Yourself

#### A. Are You Christ-like

1. do you call yourself a Christian
2. do you think God considers you Christ-like
  - a. do you do as Jesus did or would do?
  - b. or do you make a mockery of Jesus's name by attempting to wear it (like a coat that is just way too big for you to put on): 2 Cor. 13:5

#### B. Do You Have a Pulse?

1. the church in Sardis didn't; do you?
2. are you working for the Lord; is your attitude right: 1 John 3:16-18
3. are you diligent to make your calling and election sure or are you content to take your chances?

#### C. Does Your Righteousness Exceed That of the Pharisees and Scribes?

1. Jesus noted this in Matthew 5:20, remember?
2. or are you hypocritical?: Matt. 7:3-5 and 15:7

### **Conclusion**

This lesson ought to prick the hearts of some around here. I have too many brothers and sisters who are taking their chances in the judgment rather than making it sure. Won't you take a step back to the Lord today by repudiating the idol in your heart that stands where Jesus should?



# Below The Surface (Part Two)

by J.S. Smith • delivered 26 June 1994 • Austin, Texas

## Introduction

i. O.J. Simpson is currently a suspect in the murder of two people in California. His claim of innocence centers around an assertion that he was somewhere else on the night in question. As O.J. stands before the American people now and as he will stand before a jury later this year, he wants to appear innocent and he will want his hearers to believe he was indeed somewhere else. We must ask and the prosecution will surely inquire, “Can you prove it?”

ii. What if O.J. says ‘No.’? Will we believe him? Will the jury believe him? While he may appear innocent on the surface, one must look below the surface to determine the facts and become certain of the truth.

iii. This lesson will deal with proving things to be true or untrue.

## Discussion

### I. Prove All Things (1 Thess. 5:21)

#### A. The Meaning of the Command

1. it is an obligation and responsibility of every Christian
2. we could use the word “test” in its place
3. Paul uses a form of the same Greek word in 1 Corinthians 3:12-13

a. the gold, silver and precious stones survive the testing of the fire while the wood, hay and stubble fail and perish

b. Similarly, Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego survived Nebuchadnezzar’s fire while three ordinary men perished; they were Jehovah’s servants while the others were not

#### B. Tried By Fire

1. God’s word is a this type of standard—one to which anything can be compared and tried or tested

a. it is a discerner of man’s deepest thoughts and intentions: Heb. 4:12

b. it is a hammer that crushes things of an ungodly inferior nature

c. it is indeed the testing fire: Jeremiah 23:29

2. put every doctrine, every preacher, every religious body and every practice into the fire of God’s word—what will survive the test and emerge: New Testament church, preachers, doctrine, plan, worship and practice

3. because the word of God sanctifies the true from the false (John 17:17)

#### C. The Wrong Fire

1. the fire of feeling

a. I feel that baptism is unnecessary—who cares what you feel?

b. I feel that baptism *is* necessary—who cares what *you* feel?

c. prove it by God’s will!

2. the fire of ancestry

a. my parents believed this way and so I do, too

b. what would Stephen say to you (Acts 7:51)

c. did your parents die for you or did Jesus? Trust Him

3. the fire of the majority

a. well, most people agree that instrumental music is permissible

b. Moses warned the Israelites against following a crowd to do evil in Exod. 23:2

c. Jesus said the majority will go to hell—shall we follow them?

4. the fire of creeds, manuals, confessions, synods, conferences, councils, conventions, catechisms or prayer books

a. Jesus is the lone lawgiver for the church (James 4:12)

b. He has all authority (Matt. 28:18)

c. It is his will, not ours, against which we will be judged

### II. Test the Spirits: 1 John 3:24-4:1

#### A. Admonitions To Beware of False Prophets: Jude 4

1. Peter warned of the untaught and unstable who “twist [the Scriptures] to their own destruction”: 2 Tim. 2:1-3, 2 Tim. 3:6-8, 13 and 2:17-18
2. they are deceptive by nature: 2 Cor. 11:3-4, 13-15 and Eph. 4:14
3. I could go on all night

#### B. These Were to Be Noted

1. the writers of these admonitions were fearful for the fate of their brethren and of the church
2. news had traveled the grapevine as it does today and it was troubling
  - a. many were falling prey to the Judaizing teachers who exchanged the sufficiency of Jesus for the pomp of the Old Law (cf. Galatians, Romans and Hebrews)
  - b. there was already dispute over the resurrection and the deity and humanity of Jesus
  - c. sensuality and greed had crept into the worship services and the Supper
3. the purveyors of such tripe were to be marked: Rom. 16:17-18
4. Paul did this himself with reference to Hymenaeus and Philetus in 2 Timothy 2:17

#### C. Doctrine: A Test of Fellowship

1. fellowship is a joint participation in a task (i.e. Paul and the Philippians, Phil. 1:5, 4:14-16)
2. fellowship must not exist with false teaching or practice: “avoid them” (Rom. 16:17, Titus 3:9-11 and 2 John 7-11)
3. Peter, James and John could extend the right hand of fellowship to Paul and Barnabas because they were all proclaiming truth: Gal. 2:7
  - a. they saw that Paul had the truth and extended the right hand of fellowship
  - b. had he taught error, they would have corrected him

#### D. We Must Try the Spirits (Teachers) Who Come Our Way

1. before supporting them financially, we must make certain they deserve the right hand of fellowship and our support
2. before we bid them godspeed, we must be certain of their intentions
3. before we give them this pulpit...

### III. Strategy To Accomplish This

#### A. Know The Truth, So That You May Utilize It

1. Paul instructed Timothy how to deal with false teachers: 2 Tim. 2:14-18
2. 2 Timothy 3:10-15

#### B. Follow Wisdom

1. Nehemiah wanted the people to understand the law, not just the priests but everyone
2. you, too, should know the new law and not depend on someone else to watch for you
3. be a Berean: Acts 17:10-11
4. take notes and examine your lessons at home against the scriptures to be certain that you are hearing truth

### **Conclusion**

Be diligent!

# Joy In The Hill Country

by J.S. Smith • delivered 3 July 1994 • Austin, Texas

## Introduction

- i. [Read Luke 1:26-42.] Luke's record begins in a logical place—at the very beginning. He recounts the angel's visit to Elizabeth and his proclamation that she would bear John. He then turns to Gabriel as he visits Mary and delivers news that brings joy to her and would eventually bring joy to all the hill country—of Judea—and the whole world.
- ii. There are many doctrinal questions that are answered in this passage of scripture but they are under attack from all sides in our age. We will discuss the fact that Jesus was born of a virgin woman today.
- iii. Let us conclude the account we have read from another writer: Matt. 1:18-25.

## Discussion

### I. Drawing the Battle Lines

#### A. Many So-Called "Christian Organizations" Discount the Virgin Birth

1. some regard the virgin-birth doctrine as an attempt to explain the presence, power and action of God in the person of Jesus
2. in others, a majority of members accept it while a substantial minority reject it
3. some groups say that you may hold to the virgin-birth doctrine if you find it spiritually helpful, but may also reject it if you choose
4. other groups view it as old terminology that is no longer pertinent to the religious needs of deep and thoughtful, educated men and women of today

#### B. But The Virgin Birth is Essential to Christianity

1. if Jesus was not born of a virgin, the whole faith is a fraud
2. if not, he is not the son of God and is a liar because he said he was
3. if not, the New Testament is a fraudulent document because it makes the claim plainly
4. if not, he was a mere man and the illegitimate child of an adulteress

### II. Two Main Sources of Proof That Jesus Was Born of a Virgin

#### A. Prophetic Proof: Gen. 3:15

1. no mention of the seed of man; only seed of woman is foretold: Isa. 7:10-14
  - a. when Ahaz refused to ask for a sign from the Lord, Isaiah gave a sign to the house of David
  - b. the sign was that a virgin would conceive and bear a son and call him "God With Us"
  - c. Matthew points to this prophecy as being fulfilled in the birth of Jesus to Mary (Matt. 1:20-23)
3. Jeremiah 31:22 promises coming of Christ and the making of a new covenant with the people of God
  - a. Jeremiah speaks of a specific creation and an entirely new event
  - b. a woman will encompass a man (figurative of conception)
  - c. that seems like nothing new, but look harder: no man is mentioned in the conception

#### B. Testimonial Proof

1. by Elizabeth, filled with the Holy Ghost (Luke 1:41)
  - a. before Mary could report her news, Elizabeth acknowledged that Mary was the mother of the Lord: Luke 1:42-44
  - b. she also confirmed by inspiration the truthfulness of what the angel said to Mary: Luke 1:45
  - c. were Mary an adulteress and with an illegitimate child, would Elizabeth express such joy?
2. by Simeon, on the forty-first day after Jesus was born, his parents took him to be dedicated in the temple; being the firstborn, he had to be presented to God with a sacrifice of the turtle doves or young pigeons (Lev. 12:1-6)
  - a. Simeon was living in Jerusalem and was inspired of the Holy Spirit
  - b. he was righteous and devout and the Spirit had revealed to him that he would not die until he saw Christ: Luke 2:27-35
  - c. were Jesus illegitimate, he could not have entered the temple at all, much less be the Christ (Deut. 23:2)
3. by Anna, the prophetess, who was old and devout and inspired by the Holy Spirit: Luke 2:36-38

#### 4. by Paul (Gal. 4:4)

### III. Logical Proof

#### A. Mary's Reaction Proves She Was Not an Adulteress

1. nature of a betrothal in the ancient near east
  - a. more binding than modern engagement; could only be broken on grounds of adultery
  - b. the law of the rabbis stated: "If a virgin espoused to a man is found to be with child, he shall denounce her before the council and they shall stone her with stones till she die; and thus shall you put sin out from among the people"
  - c. the situation is legislated upon in Deuteronomy 22:13-21
    1. the law of Israel stated that if a virgin engaged to be married to a man were discovered to be with child, the man should denounce her before the Sanhedrin
    2. the officiating priest must then conduct an investigation into the claim, study the evidence and finally pronounce judgment; a guilty person was stoned by the offended and then by the whole town
2. Mary's actions do not fit this scenario
  - a. aside from the legal penalty, the stigma that used to be attached by society to an unmarried woman who became pregnant would have led her to conceal her pregnancy if she were an adulteress
  - b. but Mary did not hide her pregnancy—on the contrary, she rushed to inform her cousin Elizabeth and present herself in the family way as I'm sure many of you ladies have done in the past when you discovered you were with child
  - c. and who was Elizabeth but the wife of the officiating priest, Zacharias—the official who would conduct the examination and pronounce judgment upon her!
  - d. logic tells us that these are not the actions of an adulteress carrying an illegitimate child

#### B. Mary's Character Proves She Was An Unlikely Adulteress

1. she was a virgin in every sense of the word: Luke 1:26-27, 34
2. she was a maiden of Israel raised in a pious home, deeply learned in the word of God (Luke 1)
  - a. Mary cites 23 separate Old Testament passages in these 11 verses
  - b. are these the words of the heart of a woman guilty of sinning against God and her betrothed, the mother of an illegitimate child, a woman facing stoning?

#### C. Mary's Silence At Jesus's Trials and Crucifixion Prove Her Innocence

1. Jesus was condemned because he claimed to be the son of God
  - a. he was a blasphemer under Israel's law and in the eyes of the judges who perceived his claim to be untrue: Matt. 26:63-66
  - b. the law prescribed death for this offense (Lev. 24:16)
2. logic persuades us that no mother who loved her son as Mary loved Jesus would stand by and allow him to be tortured and killed if she could prevent it
  - a. no mother would allow her son to die even to save her reputation
  - b. consider the mother who was willing to allow her son to be raised by another woman in Solomon's day just so that he would not be split in two
3. Mary was present at the crucifixion of her son and had followed him through the trials
  - a. she could have stopped the execution at any point by naming the real father
  - b. the misled man named Jesus, the son of Mary and some neighbor perhaps, would have been forced to recant his claims to be the son of God; Mary could have spared his life by doing this
4. but Mary did nothing; the only explanation is that she knew Jesus died for a fact
  - a. Mary knew that he was born of her while she was a virgin
  - b. she knew he was the son of God in fact

### Conclusion

The virgin-birth of Jesus can be proven and should be accepted. Do you believe that Jesus is the son of God? He died for that claim—will you live for it? There will be joy in the hill country and beyond today if you will only obey Jesus!

# Wisdom in Liberty

by J.S. Smith • delivered 3 July 1994 • Austin, Texas

## Introduction

i. Tomorrow, we will take a day off from our normal routines and celebrate the birth of our nation and the wonderful freedoms and liberties that we enjoy thanks to the bravery and perseverance of our forefathers. As we prepare to celebrate Independence Day, I think it is even more important that we take a moment today to study the greater liberty we have in Christ Jesus.

ii. The Bible is a document of liberty from start to end. God has always desired to see his people free. But the freedom the Jews fought for and won in the OT was but a mere shadow of the liberty God granted all men who would obey Christ.

## Discussion

### I. Freedom From Egypt

#### A. Israelites' Comfort Ends

1. they had relative freedom while Joseph lived and served Pharaoh
2. but when Joseph died that changed abruptly: Exodus 1:8-14
3. then Pharaoh commanded that the midwives kill all the male children of the Hebrews when they were born but God foiled his plan and made him angrier

#### B. Moses is Born And Serves God: Exod. 2:1-10, 2:23-25

1. God appears to him in a burning bush and tells him of liberty to come: Exod. 3:7-12
2. Moses responds: Exod. 3:19-20
3. Moses confronts Pharaoh with God's will and allows him to choose freely: Exod. 5:1-1-9
4. the Hebrews' lot only seemed to worsen and they grew dissatisfied with Moses and with God

#### D. The Ten Plagues

1. waters become blood, but Pharaoh is unimpressed: Exod. 7:20-23
2. Pharaoh promised to let them go if Moses would remove the frogs but reneged: Exod. 8:5-7, 12-15
3. lice: Exod. 8:17-19
4. the fourth plague saw flies overtake Egypt; Pharaoh was sickened: Exod. 8:28-32
5. livestock diseased (Exod. 9:1-7)
6. boils: Exod. 9:11-12
7. hail: Exod. 9:24-28
8. locusts allowed God to use Pharaoh to teach others: Exod. 10:1-2
9. darkness leads Pharaoh to make a false promise of release once more: Exod. 10:27-29
10. death of the firstborn: Exod. 11:4-7
  - a. the Passover was instituted to mark this difference God was making: Exod. 12:12-14, 29-32
  - b. as they made their exodus out of Egypt, Pharaoh reconsidered once more and pursued the Hebrews; but after Moses had parted the Red Sea and the Israelites had safely passed through, he closed the waters again and the pursuing Egyptians perished: Exod. 14:30-31

#### E. Summary

1. prior to the exodus, the Jews enjoyed certain freedom to worship God as He chose
  - a. they began to take this freedom for granted and it was lost
  - b. the Exodus account reviews their regaining this freedom
  - c. but it wasn't long before they began to take this liberty for granted again and to beg for bondage
  - d. see the great effort by God and Moses to effect this liberty
  - e. something that required this much work should be treasured forever
  - f. so many of them used their liberty as a license to sin against the God who freed them
2. from about 1446 B.C.-606 B.C., the Hebrews rejected God time and again
  - a. through Moses and the judges and the kings and the divided kingdoms
  - b. finally the Lord's patience drew nigh to end
  - c. national liberty was once more going to be swallowed up in invasion and conquest

## II. Our Dual Liberty

### A. American Liberty

1. liberty achieved by men who looked to God for guidance and desired to worship Him without intimidation by the government; won with blood and great effort
2. religious liberty a major part of their effort and success: forefathers left Europe in large part to escape religious tyranny
  - a. state sponsored religion prescribed the way in which one must worship and believe
  - b. this was often opposed to Biblical truth
  - c. sincere religious people with the strength and interest to investigate the truth will not long bow to the commandments of men that violate the demands of God
  - d. the first amendment to the Constitution in the Bill of Rights determines that our government cannot order anyone to worship according to a state-run religion
    1. we are free to worship according to the Bible
    2. when the Bible says and how it says
    3. the Hebrews in our text were not afforded this freedom by their government in Egypt
      - a. they could not worship how or when God commanded without facing punishment of law
      - b. neither could New Testament Christians worship according to the Truth without risking imprisonment or death
      - c. this blessing of ours ought never to be taken for granted
3. how do you exercise this liberty?
  - a. what if that liberty were suddenly taken away?
  - b. would you yell and scream about not being able to worship anymore
  - c. will you bemoan the loss of a freedom that you never found much use for before?
  - d. my wife's friend is dissatisfied with her church in part because so many people don't show up on Sunday nights; it is a discouragement to her
  - e. I was going to tell Michele that we aren't that way, but I couldn't because too many of us are
  - f. do you use your freedom to proclaim the gospel as often as you can?

### B. Still No Comparison to Our Spiritual Liberty in Christ Jesus

1. doesn't always include national religious liberty: Acts 4:1-3, 18-20 and 21:26-30
2. but it always includes a liberty from sin
  - a. a Christian may have the burden of his sins removed (John 3:16)
  - b. Peter preached baptism for the remission of sins on Pentecost and Ananias told Paul to be baptized to wash away his sins (Heb. 8:12), but he is not free from committing sins
  - c. Paul described the battle that the Christian wages daily with the fleshly lusts and appetites that continue to wage war with the spirit (Rom. 7): 1 John 1:6-10
3. but we mustn't take this liberty for granted, either: 1 Peter 2:15-16
  - a. a Christian should not use his freedom from sin as a cloak to commit sin
  - b. we should not take advantage of our liberty to sin because we feel we can always repent when we're done; this attitude is misguided, dangerous and deadly
  - c. God's grace is a wonderful thing and it is his grace that allows our sins to be forgiven
    1. the often unstated opinion of some is that the more we sin, the more God's grace will abound
    2. Paul recognized the possibility that some would take their liberty and use it as a license to sin against God: Rom. 6:1-7
    3. and Romans 6 speaks further to those who feel that apostasy is impossible and to those who feel that sin is permissible as long as you intend to repent afterward: Rom. 6:14-18
      - a. could I tell my wife that I am going to burn all her dresses and that I will be sorry afterwards and get away with it?
      - b. kids, could you tell your mother that you are going to take a sledgehammer to the TV but you will be sorry afterward and get away with it?; this is about responsibility and love for God

## Conclusion

Let us use our liberty wisely—for God.

# A Little Leaven

by J.S. Smith • delivered 10 July 1994 • Austin, Texas

## Introduction

i. “A little leaven leavens the whole lump.” This is a phrase that is used just a few times in the New Testament. The leaven is used to describe an evil influence that spreads and contaminates everything around it.

ii. There are many evil influences which Christians have been warned to beware. They are the same as they were in the apostles’ days and it is important for us to note the evil influences that seek to contaminate our individual faith in Jesus and the church as a whole.

## Discussion

### I. Influence to Corrupt Church With Sin

#### A. Of Outsiders

1. we all have friends, relatives, co-workers or classmates that are not Christians
2. as much as we may like them, we must beware of the influence they may have on us: 1 Cor. 15:33
  - a. closer: “Do not be led astray: Bad associations corrupt good customs.”
  - b. a stern warning to a church located in a godless city where bad associations were a particular likelihood and danger; these associations could have been of any of the natures we mentioned
  - c. the warning is important because it warns about a possible of backsliding
  - d. do you see the leaven in this verse--it is the bad association that spreads beyond a casual acquaintance in your life to a major influence on what you do and how you live
  - e. eventually, your good customs may be thoroughly corrupted: 1 Peter 4:3-5

#### B. In The Acceptance of Sin in Brothers and Sisters

1. as we have discussed before, the character of the community has always been a particular evil influence which the church and its members must watch carefully
2. the most obvious Bible example is in Corinth where a city given to sexual immorality was introduced to Christianity
  - a. many Corinthians chose to follow Christ and some of those continued to suffer from the evil influence of the city
  - b. Paul confronts the results of allowing societal iniquity to seep into the kingdom: 1 Cor. 5:1-2
    1. not only was this immorality going on, it was being permitted by the brethren
    2. and moreover, it had actually become a source of pride for them!: 1 Cor. 5:4-5
  3. Paul worried about the entire church becoming contaminated, if it hadn’t already: 1 Cor. 5:6-7
  4. Paul saw how the leaven was spreading among the brotherhood and he acted quickly to purge it before it spread further: 1 Cor. 5:8
  5. the message of tolerance of sinful acts like adultery, fornication, homosexuality and doctrinal heresy has gone beyond Oprah and Sally; it has permeated the church like leaven
    - a. no where does the Bible command us to tolerate sin in the church
    - b. religious denominations have gradually allowed the leaven of unscriptural tolerance to contaminate them completely
      1. in most, anything goes--come as you are and stay as you are
      2. our more liberal brethren have decided that they need to be competitive with the denominations and have implemented that tolerance strategy themselves

### II. Influence to Lead Us Astray From Our Faith May Come From Inside or Out

#### A. Through Hypocrisy: Gal. 2:11-13

1. it spread like leaven
2. it was based in falsehood and could have damaged a lot of souls: Luke 12:1-5
  - a. the spirit of Pharisaism sought the honor of men and feared men rather than God
    1. it yielded to public opinion and though it seemed deeply pious on the surface, was in fact devoid of all loyalty to God
    2. the trials and persecutions ahead of Christ’s disciples would destroy any Pharisaically-spirited Christian

3. all Christians face some type of persecution or mistreatment because of their faith
  - a. the temptation may be to take the painless way out and deny the faith to seek safety
  - b. that's what a Pharisee would do
  - c. though the fear of what others think of you or even might do to you is great, the fear of God ought to overpower that: Acts 4:18-21 , Luke 12:8 and Matt. 23:1-3
    1. the Pharisees lived by the attitude of "Do as I say, not as I do."
    2. this is hypocrisy in its essence

#### B. Through Bitterness and Strife

1. peace should be pursued between people: Heb. 12:12-15
  - a. but not at all costs; this is a misconception among many
  - b. the cost of holiness is not to be paid, that is we may not exchange our holiness before God for peace between men; the church may not alter God's commands in the name of tolerance
  - c. the fellowship in the work of the Lord in which we all must share brings unity and peace
  - d. unity and peace come from striving together with one mind (Phil. 2 and Eph. 4) and not from compromising with sin
  - e. roots of bitterness and strife should be watched for constantly and uprooted when found immediately to prevent them from tripping a Christian and causing him to fall away
2. uprooting bitterness and strife: Titus 3:8-11
3. it is sufficient to note that inevitably there will be some problem in the church
  - a. problems of strife or bitterness should be handled before their leaven spreads and splits
  - b. before we bite and devour each other (Gal. 5)

#### C. Through Desire for Flesh

1. already covered in previous points
2. reemphasize that no Christian is immune from the influence of worldly people and lusts

### III. Influence to Corrupt Truth With False Teaching

#### A. "Intellectual Speculation" Can Be Cancer: 2 Tim 2:14-18

1. walking like the old Gentiles in the futility of their minds (Eph. 4:17)
2. the 60s mantra of "question authority" has overcome many
  - a. not saying that you shouldn't examine preaching
  - b. not saying that you should follow blindly
  - c. but questioning every little thing for the sake of dispute is cancer
4. cancer is just like leaven in that it spreads and contaminates the whole
  - a. one or two given to vain babbling can induce others to waste time with useless questions
  - b. not every question deserves an answer
  - c. sometimes a question is raised that is of no benefit and is actually harmful in that it may influence others to be so leavened: 2 Tim. 2:14-15 (shun them)
5. cancers on humanity like Darwinism and humanism and the Big Bang Theory were born out of intellectual speculation beyond the word of God

#### B. Other Examples

1. Neo-Calvinism invading the church of Christ
2. the seductive words of the new unity movement
3. such teachers (purveyors) will bear the blame: Rom. 16:17-18

### Conclusion

Let us go on guard against those who would make shipwreck of our faith through their influence. Realize that they may be out of the church or within. Our "adversary, the devil, prowls about like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour" (1 Peter 5:8).

# The Leaven of the Kingdom

by J.S. Smith • delivered 10 July 1994 • Austin, Texas

## Introduction

i. [Read Luke 13:20-21.] Yeast was not preserved in by itself in these days—a piece of leavened dough left from the last baking was added to the new dough to ferment it. Three measures was the quantity usually taken for one baking. Leaven is defined as an element, influence, or agent that works subtly to lighten, enliven, or modify a whole. Leaven is usually used in the Scriptures to describe evil, but not here

ii. Like the leaven, the gospel was introduced to the world as an apparently worthless substance or agent. But like the leaven, the word of God is an element, influence, or agent that works subtly to lighten, enliven, or modify a whole. The gospel of Jesus Christ introduced its first citizens to the kingdom as fishermen and housewives and tax collectors—they spread the leaven to rulers and wealthy businessmen—the gospel spread all over the world and changed it forever. Like leaven, the kingdom spread its influence quickly, quietly, thoroughly and completely.

iii. We do poorly when we forget the power of the influence that each of us has in our own circles of life. As Christians, sinners and other Christians alike look to us as examples of what Christ-like is. Some may look to us for a reason to denigrate the faith while others look to us for a light in their lives. We must spend time ensuring that our influence—for whatever purpose it is sought—is positive.

## Discussion

### I. Our Influence Can Show the Power of the Gospel

#### A. To Sinners Who May Come: 1 Peter 2:11-17

##### 1. Peter tells us to be different

a. the common thing to do when reviled is to shout back and sink to the depths of the persecutor and so appear no better or different to him or bystanders

b. but the honorable thing to do when reviled is remain calm and honorable

c. so that even they might be moved by your conduct and search out the source of your peace

##### 2. this involves submission to the laws of the land—even traffic laws

3. so that ungodly men who search for evidence of your vice might be confounded and instead be put to silence: Phil. 2:14-16a

a. the world is perceived by the inspired New Testament writers as a place of darkness in which the light of Jesus shines ever brighter through his disciples

b. while others may grumble and whine about the difficulties and necessities of life, Jesus's disciple should discreetly persevere

1. that among your neighbors and co-workers and classmates and even relatives, the Christian may be found by all to be blameless and harmless—one worthy of trust and respect

2. that you may be held without fault in the midst of fault-ridden people

3. it is in this dark, light-starved cave of iniquity that Jesus's disciple glows with the glory of Christ

4. exhibiting all that a good disciple has learned from his master—the words that lead to eternal life

5. that those neighbors, co-workers and relatives might be led to investigate the fount from which your righteousness flows: Matt. 5:3-12

a. Jesus identified those who followed him and encouraged them to persevere

b. he told them how to conduct themselves in this dark and unseasoned world: Matt. 5:13-16

4. this speaks to those who are not married to Christians that your constant light in your spouse's life may compel them to seek its source: 1 Peter 3:1-2

#### B. To Evil Men Who Will Not Come: Titus 2:7-8

##### 1. this is specifically written to a preacher, but readily applies to any who is called Christian

a. a pattern of good works, the formation of a reputation

b. we are putting together daily a pattern by which we will be known overall

c. honest teaching that desires truth above self, a healthy fear of God whose will you handle and principles that will not be forgotten in favor of earthly lusts and ambitions

- d. a method of teaching that cannot be faulted or condemned by opponents bent on discrediting the gospel through men
- e. that the godless adversary may himself be ashamed when he comes up empty-handed in his search for incriminating evidence
- 2. fear not, God is on your side: 1 Peter 3:13-17
  - a. always be prepared to explain your hope amidst all this hopelessness
  - b. have a good conscience so that when you are accused, your pattern may discredit them and not you and the gospel

## II. Our Influence Can Encourage Others to Be Better Christians

- A. In Service to God: Heb. 11:4
  - 1. I know Abel was not a Christian but he is an example of righteous faith
  - 2. it was Abel who worshipped according to all that God commanded while his brother Cain sought to modify God's command
    - a. we should treat our brother after Abel's example and encourage him to walk closely to the commands and never to insert our own reasoning into them
    - b. after Cain had killed Abel, he was asked by God where the murdered brother was, he replied, "Am I my brother's keeper?"
      - 1. in a certain sense, we are to assist our brother in whatever way we can that he might attain heaven
      - 2. we are to bear one another's burdens (Gal. 6:2)—that is in relation to restoring them to a right relationship with God if possible
      - 3. we have example and influence of Jesus; we must strive to do God's will as he did: 1 Peter 2:21-25
- B. To Be Better People
  - 1. it is impossible to separate what kind of person you are from what kind of Christian you are
  - 2. the way I act will influence other Christians in their behavior
  - 3. it will also bear upon the gospel itself: 1 Timothy 6:1-2
    - a. a Christian that dishonors his employer may bring reproach upon the gospel
    - b. a Christian that takes advantage of an employer who is also a believer will cause dissension all about: Titus 2:9-10 and 1 Peter 2:18-20
- C. To Fear God Properly
  - 1. the example of Ezra in the Old Testament who proclaimed the truth to a people who had become ignorant of it: Ezra 10:1
  - 2. fear and respect for God will rub off on others with soft hearts
- D. Our Influence Can Encourage Others to Persevere
  - 1. despite the opposition: 1 Thess. 1:2-10
  - 2. other churches were aware and emboldened at the mettle of Thessalonica
  - 3. those who persevere and never quit will reach God's mercy: James 5:10-11 and 2 Timothy 4:8

## Conclusion

# So Speak And So Do

by J.S. Smith • delivered 17 July 1994 • Austin, Texas

## Introduction

i. One of the saddest things I encounter from time to time is talking with people who have never obeyed the gospel of Jesus Christ and yet have been completely convinced that God will save them nonetheless. This is a result of denominational error and man's yearning for acceptance but dread of obligation. Scriptures have twisted in the names of Luther and Calvin to soothe worried consciences and yet even a good conscience is insufficient before God. It is obedience to His will and His Son that justifies a man before God on the path toward salvation.

## Discussion

### I. Will God's Partiality Save You?

#### A. Many Think So

1. "I'm basically a good person."
2. "I have led a virtuous life."
3. "I'm not as bad as murderers and atheists!"
4. "Why I attended services every time the doors were open."

#### B. True Grounds of Acceptability: Acts 10:34-35

1. even this preacher had to be convinced that God was not partial to any man or race
2. the first ground for acceptability is the fear of God: that is, a respect for God that fosters the desire to please Him as a Father and a certain terror of falling into the hands of the living God in unfavorable judgment
3. secondly, is the ground of working righteousness which implies more than saying the right things or even believing right things; it is doing the right things

#### C. Working Evil Is Necessarily Excluded And Will Be Judged Impartially: Rom. 1:28-2:4

1. no escape for these, especially the hypocritical: Rom. 2:5-11
2. God will render to each man according to his works on every soul of man; there is no partiality

### II. Will Prayer Alone Save You?

#### A. Unscriptural Concept of Prayer

1. on television, you see people with the most immoral and ungodly of lives praying in times of sorrow or distress
2. they pray that they will improve their lives if only their brother pulls through; when he does and the episode is over, it's back to iniquity
3. the only prayer of a habitual sinner that God hears is one that begins with repentance: John 9:31
  - a. those who do not believe that God can deliver ask in vain (James 1:6-7)
  - b. those who pray that their sin might be enlarged ask in vain (James 4:3)
  - c. psalmist confessed God would not hear him if he regarded iniquity in his heart (Psalm 66:18)
4. prayer belongs to the righteous and the penitent

#### B. What Say the Scriptures?: Matt. 7:21-23

1. "Lord, Lord" is a prayer and here is the prayer of some who appeared to be sheep, who seemed to do mighty works but were in reality ravenous wolves who worked iniquity (context)
2. it is not simply the one who calls upon Jesus but it is the one who obeys Him and does His will
3. Judas and Balaam were such wolves in sheep's clothing

### III. Will Any Robe Save You?

#### A. The Context of Revelation 22:14-15

1. rendered "Blessed are they that do his commandments..." (equivalent to the Greek phrase, "Blessed are those who are washing their robes...")
2. in Revelation, the image of one's robes is used to identify the state of his soul
  - a. Revelation 7:14 speaks of those who had been executed by Roman persecutors but were dressed in

white robes that had been cleansed in the blood of the Lamb

b. Revelation teaches that initial obedience to Christ in baptism cleanses one's robes and that one may continue to wash his robes by abiding in His will from day to day

1. explains why Paul was told to "arise and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord" (Acts 22:16) and why Peter talked of removing filth from conscience: 1 Peter 3:20-21

2. why Paul spoke of the washing of regeneration: Titus 3:3-7

B. Obvious Distinction in Revelation 22:14-15

1. the condition of one's robes tell the story and not just any robe is good enough

2. be diligent to keep our robes washed by obeying his commandments and abiding in Jesus: Titus 3:8

IV. Will Faith Alone Save You?

A. Trusting In The Evils of Partiality

1. James 2:1-9 condemns the man who treats others with partiality, or unfairly, or with the attitude that one is more worthy of respect than another

2. how could God condemn this practice if it is the way in which he predestined some men to be saved and predestined others to burn in hell fire?

3. would God make a command of man that he is unwilling to do himself or does God command us to be more righteous than he is at the penalty of spiritual death?

4. if God commands us to treat people impartially, doesn't it follow that he judges men in the same way—without respect to persons, but against His standard?

B. How Should We Live In Relation to That Standard, the New Testament?

1. with an impartial love for the brethren

2. striving to hold to the whole law of liberty, the New Testament

a. if we break a part, we transgress the whole covenant; we must repent (1 John 1:9)

b. for we must seek God's mercy for it is He who will judge us against the law and "judgment is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy."

3. James calls upon us to "so speak and so do as those who will be judged by the law of liberty."

C. What Is The Fate of One Who Talks But Does Not Do?

1. James wonders that himself: James 2:14-20

2. Abraham was justified not by believing in the existence of God, but by obeying God's will and doing it: James 2:20-24

3. Rahab was justified not by promising to hide the spies, but by actually doing it: James 2:24-26

4. is your faith composed of good intentions or good results?

a. is your faith composed of believing that God exists or does it put your own life on the altar for God to guide?; does it promise to serve the living God and then serve the flesh instead?

b. is your faith fruitful and multiplying or is it barren?

1. Jesus said of dubious disciples or brethren, "by their fruits you shall know them"

2. would you seek to hide from discernment by producing no fruit?: John 15:1-6

D. Faith Is Actually Greater Than the Calvinists Even Realize

1. more than belief it is an active belief: Gal. 5:6

2 this passage and the entire New Testament extols the value of a faith that places complete trust in Jesus and turns one's life over to Him

a. that God is not partial blasts away stubble of the predestination argument

b. Ephesians 2:8-10 coupled with all of these passages blasts away the faith alone argument

## Conclusion

I have never said that you can work your way to heaven or that you will be saved by a meritorious system of works. But the simple fact is that if you are trusting that your belief that God is will be enough to save you, you are mistaken.

# The Fire of Hell

by J.S. Smith • delivered 17 July 1994 • Austin, Texas

## Introduction

- i. [Read James 3:3-18.]
- ii. In our own weakness, we all can realize the danger that our tongues pose to our souls. We have all said things we later regretted and things we realized were sinful. It behooves us to study the scriptures dealing with the sins of the tongue and apply God's wisdom to the procreation of our mouths.

## Discussion

- I. A Lying Tongue, The Rudderless Ship
  - A. Generally Rationalized Away Today
    1. when I was growing up, anyone who did not keep his word was reviled
    2. but now lying has become so widespread, excuses are made to acquit the liar
    3. politicians have never been known for their trustworthiness, and yet nowadays, their lies are rationalized away as necessary to get elected
      - a. it is called political rhetoric
      - b. the citizenry is looked upon as naive and out of the beltway wisdom if they actually expect the elected man to keep his promises
    4. words like "I will call you today." or "I will meet you at 2:00." have become meaningless
  - B. In A Christian, It is a Sign of A Lively "Old Man"
    1. lies proceed from the father of lies: John 8:44
    2. lying attitude should be crucified in baptism with one's sinful self: Col. 3:1-10
    3. the gospel ought to be a rudder but here it clearly is not
  - C. Liars Will Be Punished
    1. lying is one of the seven abominable things which God hates (Proverbs 6)
    2. lying will subject the soul to the second death: Rev. 21:8
    3. and will prevent one from being truly a part of God's city where there is access to the tree of spiritual life: Rev. 22:14-15
- II. Boasting, A Wild Horse
  - A. Useless In The Kingdom
    1. boasting in one's wealth is a pittance before God: Psalm 49:5-9
    2. a confidence before God that is based upon one's possessions or abilities is folly
      - a. whatever that wealth might be composed of
      - b. whether it be a supply of money or good works or a clean attendance record
    3. these are not things to boast in as a comparison to another for such will do nothing to redeem one's soul
    4. the borders of the kingdom do not spread out by boasting in powerless, earthly assets
    5. a wild horse with no concept of a goal or leadership
  - B. Boasting Is Excluded From the New Testament: Rom. 3:21-27
    1. the goal Jesus had and that Paul took up was to lead men to God
      - a. they did not do this by bragging—even Jesus who had the right to boast of his perfection beneath the Old Law; instead they preached the gospel message
      - b. emphasize Psalm 49:7-8 to Rom. 3:24: redemption through Christ
    2. it should be our aim to lead men to God in the same way by the same—the only means
    3. that wild streak must be tamed
  - C. No Respector of Persons: Acts 10:34-35
    1. this primarily deals with an improper racial distinction but extends upon any question of boasting
    2. emphasizes true obedience over surface traits
    3. indeed, boasting and trusting in human reputations is dangerous, as well: 1 Cor. 4:6

- a. Christians often become respecters of men to a dangerous degree in which they cease to seek truth and instead seek a man
- b. even Paul told the Corinthians not to be puffed up in relation to him or any other preacher
- 3. all such boasting will be burned away to reveal the inner truth—whether good or bad—in the judgment
- 4. it serves only to divide and embitter in this day

### III. Slander and Gossip, Forest Fire

#### A. Defined

- 1. slander is from French word meaning “to offend,” or “stumbling block”
  - a. done with malice or the intent to hurt the victim
  - b. the slander is composed of falsehood or purposeful misrepresentation
- 2. a gossip is one who habitually reveals personal or sensational facts about another
- 3. the facts are usually true but always should be left private
- 4. by definition, these spread like a forest fire and destroy all in its path

#### B. Not Christ-Like Or Brotherly: Luke 6:45

- 1. if your speech is slanderous or gossip in nature, your heart is being put on display and it is not a heart like Jesus’s
- 2. when David was falsely accused by his brethren, he complained of being surrounded by words of hatred (Psalm 109:2-3)
- 3. “You sit and speak against your brother; you slander your own mother’s son” (Psalm 50:20).

#### C. These Should Be Put Away Also: 1 Peter 3:8-12

- 1. again words proceed from your heart and can betray your faith if it is not based in the love of Christ and neighbor
- 2. the effects are horrible: families split apart, brethren harbor ill feelings, churches split
- 3. for they will be judged: Matt. 12:33-37
- 4. fires should not be started and matches should not be played with

### IV. Profanity, A Poisonous Asp

#### A. Defined

- 1. can be blasphemy against God—taking his name in vain
- 2. or speaking words that are impure either by definition or in context
- 3. such speech is vile and poisonous

#### B. Widespread In Our Day

- 1. God’s name taken in vain in an editorial cartoon in the *American Statesman* last month
- 2. permissible in television to say anything short of two words! (it won’t be long for them)
- 3. PG movies make me blush and uncomfortable: Eph. 4:29

### Conclusion

We need to strive to have circumcised and consecrated lips that serve God and bring forth good fruits and fresh water from our hearts. Pay attention. Return to God’s morality in relation to the tongue.

# Humility Before Jesus

by J.S. Smith • delivered 24 July 1994 • Austin, Texas

## Introduction

i. It was due to the sinfulness of man that God devised the plan of salvation that is gradually revealed from the book of Genesis on through to the gospels. At the center of this great plan is Jesus, the Son of God, who was from the beginning of time and who left heaven to dwell among men so that we all might find forgiveness. In light of a knowledge of the life Jesus leads, every man ought to bow in humility before Him.

## Discussion

### I. Reason for Humility

#### A. Man Is Deserving of Death

1. when sin was introduced to the world at the temptation of the devil and the failure of the first people, death became itself a fact of life: Gen. 3:17-24
2. ever since, God has been working to show man the way to eternal life again
  - a. the Old Law was designed in part to bring man to a certain knowledge of his sin
  - b. it was a Savior that God had in mind that sinful day in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3:15)
  - c. Isaiah looked forward to the Messiah in Isaiah 53:4-10
  - d. as God closes the OT record, he gives solace for the coming 400 years of silence: Mal. 3:1

#### B. Jesus Was Humbled

1. the Lord was troubled when he looked forward to his fate: Luke 12:50
2. he was extremely distressed as that awful moment drew nigh: Luke 22:41-44
3. some discount the pain and sacrifice that Jesus undertook by saying that he was God and could feel no physical suffering
  - a. yes, he is fully deity: John 1:1-4, 14-15
  - b. but he also felt the emotions and physical effects of humanity
    1. he felt dread at the prospect of his hands and feet being nailed to a cross
    2. he was anguished at the prospect of being beaten with rods and mocked
    3. he was uncomfortable with hanging upon this tree until the life was taken out of him
    4. how would you feel?
      - a. Jesus did not go to the cross with the assurance that he wouldn't feel a thing
      - b. he went with full knowledge that it was going to be excruciating
      - c. but also with the knowledge that God would resurrect him

#### C. Jesus Was Humble On Your Behalf

1. the ultimate example of his own teaching on humility: Phil. 2:5-8
2. in his baptism by John (Matthew 3:13-17)
3. in his love for his brethren: John 13:5-16
4. in his obedience to the will of the Father in all things: Hebrews 5:5-9

#### D. Consider All This

1. in light of all that Jesus did, God in the flesh being humbled on your behalf, what should you do
2. how should you feel?; here is how some Bible characters felt

### II. "I Am Not Worthy"

#### A. John the Baptist

1. he did not permit any to mistake him for the Messiah to come: John 1:15, 19-27 and 3:28-30
2. John was content to let Jesus take the reins and follow his lead

#### B. The Centurion: Luke 7:1-10

1. by all accounts, the Centurion was a good and honorable man
  - a. of a high military rank and some wealth
  - b. reputed for generosity

- c. though a Gentile, he was spoken of highly by the Jews
- 2. even so, he acknowledged his unworthiness to stand before the King of kings and ask anything
  - a. despite his own authority, he bowed before the Master and submitted to his authority
  - b. Jesus said of this obedient and humble man, "I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel!"
- 3. earthly power is deceptive
  - a. so many who attain political or corporate power allow their heads to be swelled
  - b. so many wealthy people overestimate the reach of their power
  - c. it is rare to find one such as this who can humble himself beneath the hand of God and become a disciple of Christ
  - d. the humanistic worship of self is this type of swelled head dodge of one's responsibility before Jesus

#### C. The Righteous Publican

- 1. Jesus stood in the midst of some Pharisees
- 2. they were by repute, obsessed with their own self-righteousness
- 3. they would never utter the words, "I am not worthy" to anyone: Luke 18:9-14
  - a. The Pharisee said, "I am worthy—more worthy than this poor sinner!"
  - b. but Jesus sought humility, for only a humble man could truly submit his will to the Lord's will and be justified by his righteousness (verse 13)
    - 1. the publican knew better than to compare himself with others in a vain attempt to convince God of his worthiness
    - 2. the publican humbly begged for God's forgiveness

#### D. The Prodigal Son (Luke 15)

- 1. as the tax collectors and the lowly sinners gathered about Jesus to learn, the Pharisees and scribes complained that they were being usurped
- 2. Jesus taught of one who departed from his father and had sinned against him but who eventually desired to come back to him, even as a servant
  - a. this sinful son intended to come back not in search of his former position as a son
  - b. he had finally learned to humble himself beneath the guidance of his father
  - c. he returned with this attitude: Luke 15:21
- 3. this parable shows every man and woman the way to God
  - a. all sin and fall short of the glory of God
  - b. all must make the decision whether to continue wallowing in the pig slop or to return to bow before the Father in humility
    - c. not pointing out one's good points to God but begging, "Lord, have mercy on me, a sinner."

### III. Future Humility

#### A. The Truly Unworthy

- 1. man should feel unworthy before the love of Jesus
- 2. man should humbly kneel before him and commit his soul to Jesus
- 3. he should take up his cross and follow the Lord, for "...he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me" (Matt. 10:38).
- 4. should "...walk worthy of the calling with which you were called" (Eph. 4:1)
- 5. for one who chooses to make himself Lord in this life and put Jesus off, the humility meant for this life will be humiliation and tears instead of the next: Phil. 2:9-11

#### B. Humility Leads to Obedience Which Leads to Life: Rev. 20:12 and 15

- 1. 1 Peter 4:17
- 2. 2 Thess. 1:7-8

### Conclusion

# In Christ, But Not The Church?

by J.S. Smith • delivered 24 July 1994 • Austin, Texas

## Introduction

i. The Christian understands the place of the church in the work of God. It is God who does the saving—the pardoning of our sins. After all we sin against God when we break his law and it is only He who can grant us the remission or forgiveness of those trespasses. The church does not do the saving. With that understood, we are able to ask and scripturally answer the question, “Can one be saved without being in the church of God?”

ii. This question arises from the centuries of denominational error and hypocrisy and the hypocrisy of many reputed religious people. Men and women who seek the Lord in this era face the stumbling block of man’s innovations and trampling upon the pure scheme of God revealed in the New Testament. Many are put off or confused by the disparities among religious people and desire to belong to Christ without “joining” any church. It is the concept that religious independence is superior to belonging to an organization. This reluctance to approach the church is understandable amidst the array of conflicting denominations. But the answer is not in fleeing from Christ’s church altogether but rather to seek out the church of the New Testament. Let us do that today.

## Discussion

### I. Defining Terms

#### A. In The Church

1. worldly terms like “joining the church of your choice” are not found in the divine record
2. the Bible speaks of men and women hearing the gospel, being convicted of their sins, confessing Jesus as the son of God and being baptized for the remission of their sins
3. an example in Acts 2:40-41: there were 3000 souls added to them that day in this way
4. the Bible is without denominations and multiple faiths
  - a. no one could believe in Jesus and go out and join the church of his choice
  - b. rather, he was added to the church of God upon obeying the gospel
5. this adding is not done by a preacher or a committee but rather by God: Acts 2:47

#### B. Denominational Names

1. this discussion will use different phrases to describe the one and only church of the New Testament
2. phrases like church of Christ, church of God, or the church all are used in the New Testament and describe the church that Jesus said he would build and then died for

#### C. Importance of the Church: Jesus Purchased It With His Own Precious Blood

1. He gave his life for all; those who obey his commands are called Christians: 1 Peter 1:18-19
2. Jesus died to establish his church (Eph. 5:25): Acts 20:28

### II. One Cannot Be “In Christ” Without Being “In The Church”

#### A. The Body: Eph. 1:22-23

1. Christ is the Head (Col. 1:18)
2. the church is his body
3. Christians are individually members of it (1 Cor. 12:27)
4. as an arm is joined to a human body and is part of it, so a Christian is joined to Christ and is part of the church

#### B. The Kingdom: Col. 1:13

1. Christ is identified as the King (1 Tim. 6:15)
2. the kingdom is identified throughout the New Testament from the gospel parables to the Revelation prophecies as His church
3. Christians are individually citizens in the kingdom of Christ (Rev. 1:6)
4. one can not be a citizen in Christ’s kingdom without being in the kingdom, the church

### C. The Marriage: Eph. 5:23-32

1. Christ is the bridegroom and the church is the bride
2. the two are united as one, the church (bride) nourished by Christ (groom)
3. one cannot be united with Christ outside of the household of God which is the church: 1 Tim. 3:15
4. as foolish as Michele and I deciding to marry and then immediately going our separate ways without ever coming together as one flesh

### III. All Spiritual Blessings Are In Christ

#### A. In Christ—In The Church

1. to be in Christ is to be in His body, which is the church
  - a. brought near to God by the blood by which he purchased the church (Eph. 2:13 and Acts 20:28)
  - b. reconciled in one body to God through the cross (Eph. 2:16)
2. the church is the fullness of Him who fills all in all (Eph. 1:23)

#### B. Your Name Enrolled In Heaven: Heb. 12:22-23

1. the alternative is damnation: Rev. 20:15
2. do you really want to try to be in Christ but outside the church

### **Conclusion**

God has provided but one process and set of conditions by which he will save you from sin make you a Christian and add you to His church. He requires that you hear the gospel and believe it, that you turn from sins and confess the name of Jesus and then wash your sins away in baptism. Jesus said, "He who believes and is baptized will be saved" (Mark 16:15-16). Paul stated that through faith in Christ Jesus, one is baptized into Christ (Gal. 3:26-27). Peter told the audience on Pentecost that they would have to believe and be baptized and then they were added to God's church. Nowhere is it taught in the Bible that you can be a disciple of Christ and be saved outside of the church. Nowhere is it taught that you can be saved and then baptized into the church of your choice. There is but one faith and one church for which Jesus shed his blood (Eph. 4). God will add you to it today if you will obey his blest commands.

# Cultivation

by J.S. Smith • delivered 31 July 1994 • Austin, Texas

## Introduction

i. The letter to the Hebrew Christians is an urgent one. These saints were being troubled by Judaizing teachers and some of them were recanting their faith in Jesus to avoid being shunned by the Jews and shut out altogether. The writer sets about to show the preeminence of Jesus with the hope that the troubled saints would focus their minds on the Lord and endure the taunts of the unbelieving.

ii. We will study the fifth and sixth chapters today in which Paul encourages some of the brethren who had become dull of hearing and poor students. We certainly are not troubled by Judaizing teachers in our day, but this sluggishness in devotion to the Word is just as powerful and as troubling to saints in our day.

## Discussion

### I. Spiritual Immaturity: Heb. 5:12-14

#### A. The Metaphors of Normal Progress

1. when one first becomes a Christian, he is a “babe in Christ”
  - a. nothing to do with physical age, rather spiritual age
  - b. at this time, he is to partake of the milk of the word
    1. that is the rudimentary or basic or first principles of God’s utterances
    2. just as milk is the sustenance given to a newborn child who is not able to ingest, masticate and digest anything too solid
    3. there is nothing wrong with this—it is natural
2. but a person does not remain an infant forever, feeding upon only milk
  - a. a person grows and develops teeth and a stronger constitution with which he can ingest and chew on solid things and digest them satisfactorily
  - b. so a Christian can not remain a babe in Christ forever
    1. he must develop teeth in a sense and strengthen his spiritual make-up so that he can feed upon the meat of the word and develop thereby
    2. the milk producers say milk does a body good—true
      - a. milk is responsible for the development of the bones—the form or structure of the body
      - b. spiritually and metaphorically, the milk of the word is used to form the basic structure of faith
      - c. and progressively, milk is used to develop teeth in the body and metaphorically, teeth in the spirit that can ingest and consume the meat
    3. the beef producers could boast that their product puts the color in your cheeks and the flesh on your bones
      - a. it is the meat of the word that makes a Christian vital and active
      - b. by virtue of ingesting the meat, a Christian grows able to teach others about Jesus

#### B. The Progression

1. that mature saint
  - a. goes on to solid food because he is skilled in the word of righteousness, no longer a babe
  - b. he is complete and uses the knowledge he has ingested and is able to discern good from evil based upon God’s will
2. this is accomplished by living according to God’s prescribed diet each day
  - a. pray (1 Thess. 5:17)
  - b. study (2 Tim. 2:15)
  - c. living for God (Eph. 4:29)
    1. it is by reason of use, or exercise, of our spiritual senses that they will develop size and power: Heb. 12:12-13
    2. unused muscles and teeth will atrophy or decalcify and be rendered useless

## II. The Peril of Stagnation: Heb. 6:1-8

### A. The Christian's Taste

1. he has tasted the heavenly gift
  - a. one who was enlightened to the truth of Jesus Christ
  - b. who has walked in the new life that is enjoyed in Christ
  - c. one who has awakened in the morning with the knowledge that his sins have been forgiven and who goes to sleep at night knowing he has lived as Jesus did: 1 Peter 2:9-10
2. he has tasted the good word of God
  - a. sweeter than honey; nourished with milk . and sustained with meat
  - b. knowing the glory prepared for good and faithful servants of the Lord's
3. these are acquired tastes as we might describe some exotic dish that one may at first be reticent to sample, but upon doing do is hooked on them (like okra)

### B. Falling Away

1. one who would enjoy the taste of God's grace and then turn his back on it (stick his tongue out at it) would be rendered unlikely to be turned back to God
2. one with the image of the suffering Christ engraved on his heart who falls away from the Lord commits a heinous crime
  - a. one blessed with such knowledge
  - b. he crucifies Christ all over again and puts him to shame
3. this is not a saint who sins once, regrets it and repents
  - a. it is one who turns from Christ and begins to walk after the flesh
  - b. this is the apostate, one who begins to abide in Christ
  - c. and yet, Paul foresees the lack of spiritual maturity among those who should be feeding on the meat of the word as a harbinger of apostasy
  - d. thus he warns his reader that a lack of diligence in study may be a symptom of a larger problem

### C. The Field of Your Faith (verse 7)

1. one who gladly receives the rain that God sends to foster growth in him will make full use of it and bear great fruit with blessing from the Father: John 15:2b and 5 and 7-8
2. some land is unproductive (verse 8)
  - a. no matter if best seed is sown with great diligence amidst the most perfect rainfall, it is vain
  - b. there are some Christians who bring forth no fruit to perfection; some fall away and some never grow at all: John 15:2a and 4-6
3. the end of those who turn back from Christ is destruction

## III. Better Things: Heb. 6:9-12

### A. Confidence

1. the writer is confident that their faith will not be malnourished and feeble and ultimately perish
2. he is confident of better things which include salvation
3. they have come this far and endured this much that it would be terrible for them to give up now and forfeit eternal life

### B. Diligence

1. a word not to be forgotten by the Christian
2. more than a passing interest or cursory study and devotion to the Word
3. diligence implies a sincere and deep union with God's will
4. a diligence that endures until the end
5. always growing and progressing in knowledge and ability

## Conclusion

If you are not growing, you know what you must do.

# These Are Written (A Sermon in Scripture And Song)

by J.S. Smith • delivered 31 July 1994 • Austin, Texas

This evening's song leader is \_\_\_\_\_ .

## *Opening*

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-----  
Announcements  
Opening Prayer

## *Meditate Upon The Cross*

-----  
Reading Matthew 27:22-54  
Song #8            Glory to His Name  
Song #176        In The Glory of His Cross  
Song #536        The Old Rugged Cross

## *Meditate Upon Following Jesus*

-----  
Reading Matthew 10:32-39  
Song #70            One Step At A Time  
Song #239        Footprints of Jesus  
Song #356        If Jesus Goes With Me  
  
-----  
Middle Prayer

## *Meditate Upon Heaven*

-----  
Reading I Thessalonians 4:13-18  
Song #232        When All of God's Singers Get Home  
Song #203        Above the Bright Blue  
Song #196        How Beautiful Heaven Must Be

## *Meditate Upon The Lord's Invitation*

-----  
Invitation:        These Are Written  
Song #488        Jesus Paid It All

## *Communion and Closing*

-----  
-----  
Serving of the Lord's Supper  
Closing Prayer

-----  
Songs selected from *Hymns For Worship* by Shepard and Stevens

### **Introduction During Announcements**

- i. [Read John 1:1-18.]
  - ii. John's gospel account is unique among the four because of the intimacy with the Lord the writer reveals. In these opening lines, he introduces the reader to his subject who the apostle declared had revealed the grace and light of the Father in Heaven.
  - iii. Our study in song and scripture tonight centers around the Lord's identity and mission on Earth. Once we have sung these instructive songs and considered the scriptures that speak of the Christ, we should come to a better understanding of what discipleship means. Perhaps one will decide tonight that what is written is a reliable record of the Messiah's commands unto salvation.
- 

### **The Lord's Invitation**

**Text:** John 20:19-31

As John's gospel nears its conclusion, he recounts for his reader the appearance of Jesus to his disciples after his crucifixion and resurrection. It was Thomas's misfortune to be not among the twelve apostles upon this occasion, for all history remembers him as "Doubting Thomas" although the evidence he required was no more than what Jesus showed the others.

How can we know that the Christ arose from the dead and paved the resurrection path for all mankind? Can we insert our fingers into the nail holes of our Lord's body or into his side where the spear pierced his then dead flesh? No. Can we trust the testimony of men like John? Without a doubt, and their testimony is sufficient to the faithful that he might be saved.

Out of all the great works Christ did, John recorded these because they should be enough to cause a man to both believe and obey the gospel call and find life in the name of Jesus. Can you, like Thomas, look to Jesus this night and proclaim, "My Lord and my God!"? Will you confess him in that way and be baptized for the forgiveness of your sins?

# Desire A Good Work (Elder)

by J.S. Smith • delivered 14 August 1994 • Austin, Texas

## Introduction

i. In our national conversations today, our leaders have busied themselves with warning us of the number of absolute crises we face as a nation. From health care to welfare to crime and on and on and on, it seems our leaders find a crisis everywhere they look. Be that as it may, the church today does face a crisis—and that is a lack of Christians who desire to fill the offices of elder or deacon or evangelist. There are more churches now than ever in which elders are not appointed. Deacons are a truly endangered species and there is a troubling lack of young men who plan to preach the word.

ii. What we must do about this is begin now encouraging young men to commence training themselves to become qualified to one day serve as an elder or a deacon. We must recognize in our young men the potential to become evangelists and encourage them to increase their studies and take advantage of opportunities to grow.

iii. Likewise, we must encourage our young ladies to strive to attain the qualities necessary to be the wife of an elder or a deacon. These qualities I have hinted at and will discuss more fully from the scriptures today are qualities that, according to our genders, we all should be striving to meet.

iv. As we begin, let us recognize the need that we have here to appoint elders and make it a serious goal to do that very soon. I believe that there is a plurality of men here who are qualified but perhaps need to be encouraged to desire the office.

## Discussion

### I. The Use of the Word, “Elder”

#### A. Generically, One Who Is Older

1. an elder in the common sense of the word is an older person who is naturally possessive of experience and dignity; those who are older usually are in positions of leadership

2. the older members of the Jewish communities were referred to as elders

#### B. Specifically, In The Church

1. in the church, though, the word elder took on a new and special meaning

a. elders are certain Christians who are appointed in local churches to exercise spiritual oversight of the members of that local congregation (Acts 14:23 and Titus 1:5)

b. Paul exhorted the elders of the church in Ephesus in Acts 20

2. the goal was to have elders appointed in every church as soon as a plurality of men became qualified—never to go on for long without them

3. the word elder that we most often use is synonymous with the uncorrupted word, “bishop” or “overseer” in various translations of 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1

4. the word pastor which has been misused by our Baptist friends also refers to a work of the eldership

a. pastor is used as a verb in Acts 20:28 and is synonymous with the infinitive verbs, “to shepherd” and “to feed”

b. the word “pastor” refers to the work of the eldership (note that Paul is addressing the elders from Ephesus in verse 17 and they are overseers in verse 28)

c. used again in the list in Ephesians 4:11—surely they understood it

5. finally, the eldership as a group is referred to as the presbytery in 1 Timothy 4:14—Greek *πρεσβυτεριου* (*presbuterion*) is an Anglicized translation of the body of elders—a presbyter then is also simply an elder

### II. The Qualities of an Elder

#### A. Titus 1:6

1. blameless: beyond reproach of anyone’s accusations, whether in church or out; past sins repented of: 1 Tim. 3:7

2. the husband of one wife—logically would deal with divorce, not widower status—one who has lost a wife to death has no fault, no cause for reproach, no skeletons because of this—one who has lost a wife to divorce may have all of these and would have trouble proving ability to rule even his own

household well (1 Tim. 3:5)—like Jesus with woman at well and her confusion

3. having faithful children...-his ability to rule his own house in evident in the behavior of his children and their spiritual state—do they listen to him? are they believers?—1 Tim. 3:5

#### B. Titus 1:7

1. blameless as a steward of God (1 Cor. 4:2): like Joseph was trustworthy in Potiphar's house (Gen. 39:4-6)— elder is overseer of God's house—a steward

2. not self-willed: not forcing his will on others as a church dictator, but one who will take all into consideration

3. not quick-tempered: will not fly off the handle and make a spectacle of self and church or cause unnecessary embarrassment to someone

4. not given to wine: a servant of God must have sense not to dull his senses—true of any servant of God

5. not violent: elder will face many frustrations and must be able to deal with them gently—violent hand or mouth

6. not greedy for money: elder could use office to gain favor of business contacts or could use treasury to inflate ego

#### C. Titus 1:8-9

1. hospitable: to visitors, etc.

2. lover of what is good: connoisseur of all that is good

3. just: in decisions, willing to discipline even friends who need it, willing to disappoint even friends if it is best for church

4. "holy": set apart from the world for God

5. "self-controlled": refraining from sin himself

6. "holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught...": one who lives by word and teaches truth, that he may be able to use that code to show the opposition for what they are and show them the truth—if he does not live by it, how can he use the word for others?

7. 1 Timothy 3 adds that he is not to be a novice

#### D. 1 Peter 5:2

1. serve willingly, not by constraint

2. not for dishonest gain, but eagerly

3. not as lords over the flock, but examples of all these qualities

### III. Work of Elders

#### A. To Feed (Shepherd or Pastor) the Church: Acts 20:28

1. provide the spiritual sustenance the sheep need to survive

2. maintain the right path from the scriptures (1 Peter 5:2)

3. elders are responsible for moving the work along and ensuring that the members are being fed the word of truth and are walking orderly along God's path to eternal rest

4. the image of the shepherd is intentional

#### B. Guard the Flock From the Wolves (False Teachers): Acts 20:29-31

1. again, the shepherd must keep the sheep in his care safe

2. the wolves seek to devour the sheep with lies and falsehoods and strife

a. the shepherd, elder, must keep his eyes open wide and note the wolf when he appears

b. an elder must have the ability to sniff out the wolf

c. by his experience, he is able to sense when a wolf is eying his sheep

d. he must act quickly to prevent the loss of even one

#### C. Rule the Congregation

1. 1 Timothy 5:17 promises reward for those elders who "rule well"

2. Romans 12:8 teaches that the one who leads must do so with diligence

3. being an elder is a work and it requires one who is willing and desirous of devoting much of his

time and energy to caring for the souls of others

- a. one who is strong in his own faith and therefore, able to share that strength with others
- b. it is too often a thankless job that becomes visible to the members when trouble arises
- c. nonetheless, the elder can anticipate the honor from God in judgment instead of man's accolades

**D. Watch on Behalf of the Souls of the Congregation: Heb. 13:17**

1. responsible for being on top of things
  - a. encouraging those who need encouraging and reproofing those who need it
  - b. like the shepherd whose aim in life is to see to the security of his sheep, the elder must live with the goal of seeing everyone of the souls in his care in heaven one day
2. those under their oversight ought to count them as worthy of deep respect and appreciation for doing this
3. also should be in submission to them because they will give an account as stewards in this office

**Conclusion**

It is a difficult job but it is a necessary one. We need elders here. We are on the verge of facing untold strife in God's church and we need shepherds here to watch out for our souls and to take a leading role in supporting this church against the waves of false teaching.



# Thy Kingdom Came (Part One)

by J.S. Smith • delivered 14 August 1994 • Austin, Texas

## Introduction

i. We will begin a series of lessons examining the false doctrine known as “Premillennialism” this evening. There is probably a wide range of knowledge among us on this subject and it is our aim to make everyone a little more aware of the danger and prevalence of this doctrine. Whether you know it or not, most of your denominational friends hold to some form of it. There are various societies in Texas and in the United States that propagate it and even some churches of Christ who adhere and promote its fantastic tenets. The chances are good that Premillennialism will give the church problems in the near future and it is good for us to arm ourselves before the enemy arrives.

ii. The most difficult thing about studying Premillennialism is giving a definition that will fit all of the teachings under its umbrella. There is a wide range of approaches made by the different teachers and precious little ground upon which they all congregate. There are some things that most have in common and it is upon these which we will focus our attention:

- ◇ The moniker of the doctrine indicates that we are now living in a time that precedes a 1000 year period of great importance to God’s people.
- ◇ The nature of this 1000 year period is traced as follows, according to most Premillennialism teachers: God promised directly and through his Old Testament prophets that He would set up an earthly kingdom with Christ upon David’s literal throne in Jerusalem.
- ◇ This kingdom has not yet come into existence although Jesus and John said that it was at hand in the first century. Jesus is not yet on his throne.
- ◇ This kingdom was to be established in the first century but the Jews surprised God by rejecting Jesus and so the Godhead was forced to postpone the establishment until the world was ready.
- ◇ The kingdom of the parables is a different kingdom from the one promised in the Old Testament—it is the second choice and temporary creation of a surprised God who was forced to wait on the Jews.
- ◇ History will identically repeat itself in order to properly fulfill all Old Testament prophecy which Jesus failed to do. The Roman empire must be established once again with the far-reaching tentacles of old. The Jews must be converted to Christ to make him a real King and the Jewish system of worship and temple must be rebuilt.
- ◇ The rapture will take place during which the dead and living saints will meet the Lord in the air to be judged. There will be two judgments instead of just one. Those left behind will be judged after the Lord completes a 1000 year reign on David’s throne in Jerusalem. Jesus will wage a literal war of Armageddon.
- ◇ Finally, Jesus’s coming is imminent. This is a basic part of Premillennialism and has been for decades. Imminent.

iii. There are a couple of things that you will want to keep in mind as we study. First, Premillennialism focuses on the physical aspects of everything and leaves little room for the spiritual. It is inconsistent in most every area. Some things are deemed symbolic while others are arbitrarily deemed literal. Scholarship is poor as Old Testament prophecies and New Testament fulfillments are regularly overlooked or ignored.

iv. Our first lesson tonight will ask the question, “Did Jesus Fail?”. This is plainly the assertion of the Premillennialist teacher. Next week, we will study the reasons why Jesus is coming back against the false reasons. Finally, we will look at the big two passages upon which Premillennialism rests in two weeks.

v. This first study will focus our minds in the Old Testament prophecies of the kingdom which was then to come. We will then see in the New Testament how Jesus fulfilled these prophecies and the reality of the kingdom.

## Discussion

### I. The Promises To Abraham

#### A. Background

1. in Genesis 12, God makes a series of three promises to Abraham
2. the fulfillment of these promises occupies the rest of the Bible and indeed affect all time after they were made to our day and beyond.

#### B. The First Promise, The Nation Promise: Gen. 12:2, 13:16 and 15:5

1. this promise was made to him when he had no heir at all
2. it took 25 years to begin to be fulfilled but Abraham believed it
3. because of their age, the promise required divine and miraculous action
4. the promise was renewed to their heir, Isaac, and continued through his children until that family's descendants fled Egypt and became a distinct nation with its own customs and laws
5. God referred to this group as a holy nation unto Him in Exodus 19:8; the first promise was fulfilled

#### C. The Second Promise, The Land Promise—Gen. 13:15, 15:18

1. it is generally contended by the Premillennialist that this promise has never been fulfilled; that it waits for the millennium and the Jews return to Palestine
2. but every land promise has been fulfilled
  - a. not one thing had failed and land was identified as part of that: Joshua 23:14-16
  - b. some object that all the land has not yet been given to Israel—the land from Egypt to the Euphrates, but 1 Kings 4:21 says that Solomon reigned over the exact dimensions of the land which God had promised
  - c. still others claim that God promised to return Israel to their land after the captivity of the sixth century B.C.
    1. but God never promised to fully restore the land after captivity—He promised to bring a remnant into the land again and he did this under Ezra, Nehemiah and Zerubbabel (2 Chron. 36:20-23)
    2. besides, God told them that disobedience would remove them from the land (Deut. 30 and Joshua 23)
    3. Jeremiah prophesied that the nation would never be completely restored but would only see a remnant returned to the land; . this took place in the late sixth century
    4. all the Old Testament land prophecies were fulfilled

#### D. The Third Promise, The Spiritual Promise: Gen. 12:3

1. this blessing is fulfilled in Christ (Acts 3:25-26) unto all nations (Gal. 3:6-9)
2. it is important to note as well that the blessed are those who are sons of Abraham by faith not by flesh for now “he is a Jew who is one inwardly” (Rom. 2:29)

#### E. Summary and Final Background

1. these promises were given in a logical and identifiable sequence and were fulfilled in a necessarily logical sequence
2. these promises were all part of the larger plan to redeem the world of its sin

### II. Jesus's Mission Was To Establish The Foretold Kingdom

#### A. The Premillennialist Teaching

1. God intended to fulfill his promises and prophecies by sending Christ in the first century A.D. but the Jews surprised him by rejecting Jesus and the establishment of the foretold kingdom was put off until they would accept him
2. sometime after Matthew 11, Jesus became convinced that he could not succeed in establishing the kingdom and so altered his plan
3. the church as a kingdom is an alternate plan, not the intention of the Father, nor the result of any prophecy
4. but a comparison of Old Testament prophecies and New Testament passages will show that the kingdom prophecies actually have been fulfilled just as told and that God was not surprised by the

## Jews' rejection

### B. Prophecies and Fulfillment

#### 1. lineage and David's throne

a. David's seed would take the throne while David was dead: 2 Sam. 7:12-16

b. Matthew 1:1 declares Jesus to be the son of David, the son of Abraham: Acts 2:29-30

1. it was prophesied that this would take place while David was dead and buried and so he is still in the tomb to this day

2. his descendant was to be raised up to sit on David's throne: Acts 2:32-33

#### 2. era of the foretold kingdom's establishment

a. in Daniel 2, Nebuchadnezzar had a dream which his magic men could not decipher

1. Daniel told the king that he could: Daniel 2:28

2. the image he saw had a gold head, silver arms and breast, brass thighs and belly, iron legs and feet of iron and clay

3. Daniel explained the dream

a. Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom was represented in the head of gold

b. future inferior kingdoms were represented by the silver and the brass

c. the fourth kingdom was one that would be as strong as iron

d. Daniel also told him a fifth kingdom that would be set up during the rule of the fourth: Dan.

2:44

4. because of our advantage of retrospect and historical records, we can see that Daniel spoke of Babylonian kingdom followed by the Medo-Persian followed by the Grecian under Alexander followed by the Roman during which the unbreakable kingdom was to be established

b. our question must then be, was this prophecy fulfilled?

1. Luke 2:1 says that Jesus was born in the days of Caesar Augustus, a Roman ruler

2. Premillennialists reject this as the fulfillment and look for a literal time in which Jesus will take the throne

a. to be so, all of those events from Daniel must happen again

b. those empires will have to be reestablished so that the proper sequence is regained because the Roman empire has ceased to exist in which Jesus was to take the throne

c. John and Jesus said in the early first century that the kingdom was at hand

1. Premillennialist submit that the plan changed after they said that

2. the inspired John was wrong as was the son of God

#### 3. the nature of the foretold kingdom: Zech. 6:12-13

a. Messiah should build a temple, sit on David's throne, rule on his throne, be priest while he sits and rules on his throne

b. and Jesus does this: the church is his temple (1 Cor. 3:16), he sits on David's throne (Acts 2:34), he rules while he sits (Heb. 1:8), he is a priest on his throne (Heb. 4:14 and 8:4)

c. the church and foretold kingdom are same

1. Christ as head with same territory and same citizens and same law

2. same terms of admission

3. same memorial observance

4. those in Colossian church were in the kingdom (Col. 1:2, 13)

5. church is fullness of Christ

#### 4. rejection was not a surprise to God

a. Isaiah said that he would be despised and rejected of men (Isa. 53:3)

b. Psalm 118:22 was certainly known to God!

c. Jesus quotes it when it is fulfilled

1. as the Jews and their leaders continued to reject him and plot to crucify him, he showed them that the foretold kingdom would be snatched out of their hands and given to another group: Matt.

21:42-45, Mark 8:31 and Mark 9:12-13

2. it was written that he must suffer

3. does it sound as if he was surprised that his people were rejecting him?

4. he says in Luke 17 that he must be rejected by this generation

d. indeed, he was rejected by the Pharisees and the priests and the people at large but this did not

surprise God or Jesus—it was written that it would happen this way!

### III. Did Jesus Fail To Carry Out God's Will?

#### A. God's Will Established In Old Testament

1. we see what God prophesied would take place
2. in New Testament, we see those things happening

#### B. Other Passages Support Fact That Jesus Fulfilled God's Will: Matt. 5:17

1. his mission summarized, he would have to fulfill prophecies of himself to succeed, else he failed:  
John 17:1-4 and Acts 3:18-26
  - a. all the prophets foretold these days and Christ has fulfilled
  - b. the third promise to Abraham of spiritual blessing is fulfilled in Jesus
2. all that was written of him was fulfilled: Acts 13:25-29
  - a. John finished his mission
  - b. the rulers in Jerusalem fulfilled the prophecy of rejecting Christ
  - c. the blessing on all nations is seen fulfilled in the preaching of the gospel of Christ after his first coming and not the second!

### **Conclusion**

We have looked today into the Old Testament to see the way in which the kingdom was to be established and how the King would do that. We have seen that it was accomplished. Thy Kingdom Came!

# Thy Kingdom Came (Part Two)

by J.S. Smith • delivered 21 August 1994 • Austin, Texas

## Introduction

i. Men and women have been looking for Jesus to come back to the earth since he ascended into heaven in the early first century (Acts 1:9-11). Jesus said that he would return once more and his inspired apostles repeated his assertion. What the Bible does not reveal and what has confounded men ever since is the exact time of his return. The Christians at Thessalonica had become convinced in the mid-first century that his return was so imminent that they stopped working to support themselves and spent the day staring at the clouds and speculating with each other while others fed them and clothed them. Paul told them that Jesus was not yet ready to return and that they should get back to work. Every so often somebody will come up with some crazy prediction that Jesus will return on some day—they have figured it out! Every time they are proven wrong.

ii. This lesson will examine the scriptures that tell us why Jesus is coming back and expose some false reasons put forth by the premillennial teachers.

## Discussion

### I. The Premillennialist Position on His Return

#### A. It Is Imminent

1. this results from an imaginative concept of New Testament teaching on the subject
2. his coming is like fruit ripened to the point that it is moments away from falling from the vine
3. but did the New Testament teach the imminent return as they say?
  - a. certain things were to take place after the apostolic age: Acts 20:29
  - b. Paul evidently did not think it was going to happen too soon—not before his departure anyway
  - c. Peter was shown by the Lord how he would die in his old age and so he could not have believed or taught that Jesus would come imminently: John 21:18-19
  - d. Paul pointed to a falling away and the revelation of the man of sin before Christ's return (2 Thess. 2:1-4)
  - e. although we do not know the time of his return, it is evident that certain things were to happen first

#### B. It Will Bring About the Rapture

1. teaches that Christ will return in the clouds and catch the righteous up with him in this "Rapture"
  - a. during this time, the great tribulation will place down here on earth
  - b. the earth will be cleansed of impurity
2. Jesus will take the righteous back to earth
  - a. and set up his kingdom from Jerusalem and reign for 1000 years
  - b. at the end of the 1000 years, the rest of the dead will be raised and judged

#### C. These Are The Seeds of False Reasons for His Return

1. we will examine the scriptures to see why is truly coming back
2. we will find no evidence of these reasons

### II. Jesus Said He Would Return

#### A. The Bridegroom and the Virgins: Matt. 25:1-13

1. teaches that when Christ returns, the time to prepare for his coming will be spent—the door will slam shut like the wind
2. the premillennial attempts to put his foot in the way of the closing door to crack it open for the unbelieving Jew to slip through
  - a. but this parable shows clearly that people are to serve the Lord and prepare to meet him in expectation of his return *while he is away*
  - b. when he returns, only those who prepared are able to enter in through the gate
  - c. it is simply too late when he returns as it was for his virgins (verses 11-12)
3. where among these ten virgins do you see room for a thousand year second chance?

**B. The Man and His Servants: Matt. 25:14-30**

1. teaches likewise that when Christ returns, the time to prepare for his coming will be spent—an accounting is demanded immediately
2. the time for people to use their talents is while the man is in the far country—when he is away from them in heaven
  - a. the premillennial would slow things down and offer men a second chance that Jesus does not promise here either; when he returns, only those who have served well will be rewarded
  - b. for others, it is simply too late (verse 30)
3. where among these servants is the opportunity for a thousand year second chance?

**C. The Judge of All: Matt. 25:31-34 and 46**

1. when the son of man returns, he will sit on his throne and separate the evil from the wicked
  - a. the righteous will inherit eternal life
  - b. the wicked will go off to eternal punishment
2. where is the thousand years going to fit here?

**III. Apostles Said He Would Return**

**A. At Then End of the World: 2 Peter 3:7-13**

1. those who were skeptically looking for the promise of his coming (verse 4) were being warned of the severity and reality of the Day of the Lord (a phrase used throughout the Bible to denote a visitation of God's wrath)
2. the events of his return include the fiery destruction of the earth and the sky and *everything* pertaining to them, the judgment and destruction of ungodly men and the transportation of the righteous to new heavens and a new earth
3. Jesus will not set foot on the earth again (obviously because his coming will begin its immediate destruction)
4. he left in the clouds, will return in them, we will meet him in the clouds, and the earth will cease
5. the new heavens and earth describe the next abode of the righteous and obviously have nothing to do with the melted present earth: 1 Cor. 1:7-8
  - a. day of the Lord is equated with judgment—the hope that one would be found blameless
  - b. this puts us right back into Peter's description of the day of the Lord

**B. As The Dead Are Raised And All Are Judged: 1 Thess. 4:13-18**

1. Premillennialist believe that there will be two separate judgments—one of the wicked and one of the righteous—and base this upon I Thessalonians 4
2. this passage does not deal with the question of judgment of wicked vs. righteous but rather judgment of living vs. dead!
  - a. some Thessalonians feared the fate of their brethren who had died before the return of Christ
  - b. Paul showed that the living had no advantage over those who died prior to his return
    1. this shows how the righteous dead will be raised first, then the righteous living would be raised and then both would be caught up together to meet the Lord in the clouds
    2. does not apply to assertion of separate judgments for the righteous and wicked!: John 5:28-29
      - a. this shows that there will be one judgment
      - b. the hour—the one hour—is coming when this will be accomplished
      - c. where is the room for a thousand years here?

**C. So The Church Can Be Delivered Up To the Father: 1 Cor. 15:23-24**

1. rather than take earthly authority at his return, he will deliver the kingdom up to the Father
2. the end and his coming are connected with “then” which indicates their relationship, not separation; thousand years in between?

**Conclusion**

# Thy Kingdom Came (Part Three)

by J.S. Smith • delivered 28 August 1994 • Austin, Texas

## Introduction

- i. Matthew 24 and Revelation 20 are the two passages upon which Premillennialist teachers base their fanciful teachings. Both contain great symbolism that sends the teacher off into dreams of the signs of the times. We will look at Matthew first tonight and then the one in Revelation next week.
- ii. The main hope of the Premillennialist in Matthew 24 is that the signs and prophecies given by the Lord are harbingers of his second coming. We will see what Jesus was actually talking about.

## Discussion

- I. The Destruction of Jerusalem
  - A. The Conflict Between Jesus and the Jews
    1. grew more and more severe throughout his preaching
    2. John told of their coming rejection of their Lord years before
    3. The prophets of old has predicted and Jesus had now revealed to his disciples through parables that the Jews would be cast out of God's favor as others enter into the kingdom: Matt. 21:43
  - B. Jesus had silenced the stubborn Pharisees and Sadducees
    1. who disputed his role as the Messiah in Matthew 23:27-33
    2. God's patience was running out with the rebellious Jews
    3. Jerusalem was near to destruction along with the temple and the Jew's religion: Matt. 23:37, 24:1-2
- II. The Disciples' Question
  - A. The Temple Was The Center of Every Jew's Life
    1. the disciples of Jesus thought surely that its sad destruction would be logically connected to the most momentous event in world history
    2. the return of Jesus
  - B. Question in Matthew 24: 3 in Two Parts
    1. when will Jerusalem be destroyed?
    2. what will the signs be of Jesus's coming and of the end of the age?
  - C. Answers In Two Parts Also
    1. verse 34 says that Jerusalem would be destroyed while the current generation yet lived and there would be observable signs that it was coming
    2. verses 36-39 answers that the coming of Jesus would not be preceded by observable signs
    3. Premillennialism holds that all these signs point to the second coming of Christ, but do they?
- III. The Signs of Impending Destruction Upon Jerusalem (Matt. 24:4-28)
  - A. False Christs Would Arise
    1. rebellious Jews attempted to gain power among cohorts by pretending to be Messiah themselves
    2. extra-Biblical history of Josephus describes numerous individuals who perpetrated such claims
  - B. Wars and Rumors of Wars
    1. revolts broke out all over the Roman empire shortly after Jesus's ascension
    2. even the Jews battled among themselves
  - C. Famine and Pestilence and Earthquakes
    1. Acts 11:28 refers to one such famine in Judea and another occurred 15 years later in Jerusalem
    2. earthquakes in Crete, Smyrna, Miletus, Chios, Samos, Laodicea, Hierapolis, Colosse, Campania, Rome and Judea
      - a. in fact, earthquakes occur every day in the world at the rate of several hundred per day
      - b. most are not detectable without sophisticated equipment because of depth and small intensity
      - c. these, however, were detectable by first century men

#### D. Persecution for the Church

1. the Acts account records apostles being imprisoned and forbidden to preach
2. Stephen was stoned and the church in Jerusalem was scattered; Herod killed James
3. Paul was arrested and abused
4. false teachers troubled the church and many fell away
5. Matthew 24:13 says that he who endures all this mistreatment will survive the fall of Jerusalem; watching for these signs would enable them to know when to flee the doomed city

#### E. Gospel Would First Spread Throughout the Known World: Rom. 10:17-18

1. Paul said that the gospel had gone to every creature under heaven (Col. 1:23)
2. both of these passages are dated before the destruction of Jerusalem
3. the gospel message including these warnings went forth to all

#### F. Foolish To Project These Signs Onto Future Events

1. Jesus said they would come to pass while that generation lived
2. all fulfilled prior to the destruction of Jerusalem and the Jewish system

#### G. The Abomination of Desolation: Matt. 24:15-16

1. these other signs were general, but this is very specific (the warning that the prophecy was upon them and that they should flee for safety)
  - a. the key to determining the meaning is to discern what the “abomination of desolation” is
  - b. Daniel spoke of something standing in the holy place that is an abomination to the Jews
  - c. Luke defines this thing in Luke 21:20-21: the armies carried images of emperor worship and idolatry which would be displayed in the temple and city of God
  - d. when the armies surrounded the city, the disciples were to understand that they should flee
2. if these signs are meant to foretell the coming of Jesus as the Premillennialist hold, tell me what benefit would come to a Christian in fleeing from the Lord?
3. historical account of the siege of Jerusalem by Rome is a nauseating one (Josephus speaks of isolation, famine, starvation, disease and cannibalism before the Romans even entered the city as they surrounded it); the troops slaughtered the inhabitants when they did enter
4. Jesus describes this siege as the judgment of God upon the rebellious city with the Romans used as God’s instruments (remember the Babylonians before)

#### IV. Immediately After Those Days

##### A. Shaken Powers (verse 29)

1. same figures used to describe the destruction of Babylon in Isaiah and Ezekiel and the destruction of Rome in Revelation
2. now, Jerusalem will face destruction and her light will burn out

##### B. The Sign of the Son of Man (verse 30)

1. the sign will appear and all the prophecies of Christ will come to pass
2. men on earth will mourn as they realize their religion is gone and that the Messiah had been among them; the Son of Man will come on clouds of glory in exacting judgment upon Jerusalem
  - a. he does this figuratively while using the Romans as his instruments
  - b. this is one Day of the Lord among many in the Bible—a day when God’s judgment is carried out

##### C. Gathering the Elect (verse 31)

1. His angels, in this case, his messengers, those proclaiming the gospel, would go forth into the world and spread the gospel
2. many would receive it and be added to the kingdom as the trumpet sounds to command a charge

#### Conclusion

# Thy Kingdom Came (Part Four)

by J.S. Smith • delivered 4 September 1994 • Austin, Texas

## Introduction

i. We will complete a series of lessons examining the false doctrine known as “Premillennialism” this evening. Let’s review what we have learned thus far:

- ◇ The moniker of the doctrine indicates that we are now living in a time that precedes a 1000 year period of great importance to God’s people.
- ◇ The nature of this 1000 year period is traced as follows, according to most Premillennialism teachers: God promised directly and through his Old Testament prophets that He would set up an earthly kingdom with Christ upon David’s literal throne in Jerusalem.
- ◇ This kingdom has not yet come into existence although Jesus and John said that it was at hand in the first century. Jesus is not yet on his throne.
- ◇ This kingdom was to be established in the first century but the Jews surprised God by rejecting Jesus and so the Godhead was forced to postpone the establishment until the world was ready.
- ◇ The kingdom of the parables is a different kingdom from the one promised in the Old Testament—it is the second choice and temporary creation of a surprised God who was forced to wait on the Jews.
- ◇ History will identically repeat itself in order to properly fulfill all Old Testament prophecy which Jesus failed to do. The Roman empire must be established once again with the far-reaching tentacles of old. The Jews must be converted to Christ to make him a real King and the Jewish system of worship and temple must be rebuilt.
- ◇ The rapture will take place during which the dead and living saints will meet the Lord in the air to be judged. There will be two judgments instead of just one. Those left behind will be judged after the Lord completes a 1000 year reign on David’s throne in Jerusalem. Jesus will wage a literal war of Armageddon.
- ◇ Finally, Jesus’s coming is imminent. This is a basic part of Premillennialism and has been for decades. Imminent.

ii. Premillennialism focuses on the physical aspects of everything and leaves little room for the spiritual. It is inconsistent in most every area. Some things are deemed symbolic while others are arbitrarily deemed literal. Scholarship is poor as Old Testament prophecies and New Testament fulfillments are regularly overlooked or ignored.

iv. The original root for modern Premillennialist teaching is in Revelation 20:4: “They lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.” Teachers ignore the context of the chapter (as usual) and insist that this reign is literal with its seat in Jerusalem and Christ reigning upon the literal throne of David. They claim that the 1000 year reign must be literal. Revelation 20 is a difficult passage, no doubt, but still there is no real indication of a literal thousand year reign here.

## Discussion

### I. What The Passage Does Not Teach

#### A. The Premillennialist Claim

1. Christ will return to earth to set up an earthly kingdom
2. he will reign in Jerusalem on David’s literal throne; the righteous will have been raised and returned to earth and the wicked will be preached to
3. this rule will continue for 1000 years
4. his presence will cause the Jews to return to Palestine and be converted en masse; the Jewish system of religion will be revived with certain modifications
5. life on earth in this period will be fully idealistic

#### B. Where Is All This?

1. does not mention the second coming of Christ
2. does not mention a bodily resurrection
3. does not mention a reign on earth

4. does not mention a literal throne
5. does not mention Jerusalem or Palestine
6. does not mention us
7. does not mention Christ on earth

### C. It Is Not Here

1. strange to base a teaching on a passage that is devoid of anything resembling the teaching
2. this is the one place where we would expect to find the essence of Premillennialism and it isn't here!

## II. Revelation Context

### A. The Age of Persecution

1. Revelation was written about 96 A.D. by the apostle John as he was exiled on the island of Patmos
2. this was an era of intense persecution of Christians by the Roman emperor, Domitian—plainly stated, Christians were being killed for their beliefs
  - a. this was understandably quite disconcerting to the Christians all over the world
  - b. Christians were even commanded to worship the emperor as god
3. Revelation was written to comfort the suffering Christians of that era
  - a. the events described in the book were to “shortly come to pass” (1:1, 22:20)
  - b. Jesus told John “the time was at hand” (1:3)
4. the events of Revelation deal with the punishment of the Roman government by God for its persecution of His people and the assurance that Christians would eventually prevail in the day of judgment

### B. Limited Message to Our Age

1. the book was addressed to the seven churches of Asia who were in the midst of paganism and persecution
2. the symbols were employed by the Lord to hide the meaning from those outside of the church
  - a. just as Jesus spoke in parables to confine the meaning to his disciples
  - b. if understood, the symbols could have incited greater persecution

### C. Persecution Is Key to Revelation

1. persecutors are symbolized in the book as beasts with many heads, horns, toes and tails
2. the persecutions are signified with figures of famine, pestilence and vials of wrath
3. all these forces were unleashed against the church as the long struggle between God and Satan reached a climax
  - a. in spite of the devil's best efforts, God preserved a seed for himself
  - b. Christ prevailed over the devil's temptations
  - c. and the building of the church was a defeat to all of his scheming
  - d. righteousness will eventually win out

### D. Literal Verses Figurative

1. Premillennialist want to make the thousand years here literal
2. yet they accept most other terms in the passage as figurative or symbolic—inconsistency!
  - a. the angel, key, chain, and bottomless pit are obviously symbols to represent the execution of divine power in restricting Satan and his forces
  - b. consistency leads us to understand the thousand years as another symbol—this for fullness or completeness
    1. Psalm 50:10 says: “For every beast of the forest is Mine, And the cattle on a thousand hills.”
      - a. what does logic and knowledge of the power of God tell us here?
      - b. Does God possess all the wild beast but only a thousand hills' worth of cattle?
      - c. No, the cattle on a thousand hills is symbolic for all the cattle—completeness!
    2. Peter said that “..with the Lord, one day is as a thousand years.”
    3. Deuteronomy 7:9 says: “...He is...the faithful God who keeps covenant and mercy for a

thousand generations with those who love Him and keep His commandments...”

a. do we understand that God suddenly forgets his covenant with man after exactly 1000 generations?

b. does God exercise no mercy upon anyone from the one thousand first generation on

c. no and neither does the Premillennialist—1000 years is figurative language for completeness—all the cattle, all the days, all the generations

c. there are more than 20 figures of speech in Rev. 19 and 20 and yet only the 1000 years is singled out and literalized

### III. The Binding of Satan

#### A. Jesus's Power Exercised

1. in Matthew 12, Jesus discussed entering Satan's palace, binding him and spoiling his goods—said with reference to Jesus's power displayed in casting out demons

2. Christ was the seed of woman foretold in Genesis who came to bruise Satan's head

3. Jesus had taken the key of death and hades from Satan

#### B. In The Gospel

1. the gospel was being preached and obeyed throughout the world

2. its influences were being felt in the very centers of world power

a. the Lord bound Satan as he brought to an end the Jewish and pagan persecutions which had hindered the church

b. he was to be loosed for a short time later on—the persecution would be revived after the church had grown stronger and more mature

3. who is it that is reigning on the throne with Christ for a thousand years?

a. is it all the righteous?

b. read verse four—those reigning in this image are the martyrs who were beheaded in the persecution

### **Conclusion**

I hope that this study has answered many questions that we have about end time events and has put us on a firm plane to stand against fantastic false teaching.



# Are God's Commands Burdensome?

by J.S. Smith • delivered 21 August 1994 • Austin, Texas

## Introduction

i. When we open our Bibles, we often turn to passages in which men and women came in contact with God or with the Gospel and refused it like it were a piece of rotten fruit. We chuckle at their stupidity and remark at how we would have acted differently if we were there. “How could those foolish Jews disobey God over and over? How could the Christians disobey Jesus when his apostles were writing them personally? How could Pharaoh be so stupid to try to stand against God when he wanted His people to be let go?”

ii. We will talk about some of the reasons that God was disobeyed in past times. But we want to learn in reality why God is disobeyed in the present. Could it be that God's commands are simply too burdensome?

## Discussion

### I. The Hardening of Pharaoh's Heart in Exodus

#### A. What Did It?

1. Exodus 9:12 says God hardened his heart while 8:32 says Pharaoh hardened his own heart; which is it?; obviously, both

2. God made a demand of Pharaoh—“Let my people go!”—and Pharaoh made up his mind that he would not do it

a. God's part was making a demand upon him

b. Pharaoh's part was making up his mind—hardening his heart—not to do it

3. we see the simple principles here that were present in the Garden of Eden and are present in 1994: a command of the living God and the free choice of man to obey or refuse

#### B. The Meaning in the Text

1. as in most literature and in figurative language “heart” really refers to the mind as the center of emotions and thoughts the heart in the Bible; thus, a hardened heart is simply a mind that is made up and set

2. three different Hebrew words are used in the text, but all are translated “hardening of heart” in English, and all are defined similarly

a. “to make insensitive, unmovable or unimpressionable”

b. Pharaoh had made up his mind and nothing was going to make an impression upon him to change; he was in a state of mind that was stubbornly set upon rebellion and rejection of the commands of God

#### C. Why Was Pharaoh's Heart Hardened?

1. the command was made by a God whom he neither knew nor feared

a. Pharaoh's set of gods was artificial and included him as well

b. obeying another would have displaced self as his object of worship

2. the command was communicated through messengers whom he did not believe were from God

a. he did not respect them

b. the message was of secondary importance to the messenger

3. the command was contrary to his personal desires and plans

a. his heart was set upon building up his wealth

b. this command would cost him the tools he needed to succeed physically

4. the urgency of the command was decreased in his heart by the relief from the plagues that God allowed; on the occasions when Pharaoh was impressed with the plague and promised to obey God, God took away the plague; when the trouble passed, Pharaoh returned to rejecting God

#### D. What Was The Result?

1. Pharaoh continued to rebel against God; evidence suggests his soul will be lost for eternity

2. but God's plan succeeded without him!

## II. What Does God Ask of Us?

### A. We Must Love Him: Mark 12:28-30

1. this verse perhaps more than any shows the total commitment to God that He commands of his children
2. heart, soul, mind, and strength (ὅσους)—the latter implying “to the extent of one’s ability”
3. the command to love God sums up all that we must do in relation to Him in order to please Him and maintain a good relationship with Him

### B. We Show This Love In What We Do: John 14:15

1. one may say that he loves Jesus, but the proof is in the facts—does he keep the Lord’s commandments
2. there are a million people in the world who claim to love Jesus but the facts betray them
  - a. I know those who claim to love Him in between using filthy language
  - b. I know those who claim to love Him in between nights at the local bar
  - c. I know those who claim to love Him but have forgotten the way to the meeting house
  - d. I know of one who claims to love Jesus and yet murdered two people
3. this command is not my own; not an attempt to twist the scriptures in any way: 1 John 2:3-6
  - a. with some, it is not even a question of loving the Lord, it is as if you don’t know him at all
    1. one who claims to know the Lord and be close to Him betrays his assertion when he lives as a foreigner from His words
    2. you can call yourself a Christian—you can have T-shirts made up with Christian printed all over them—you can legally change your name to Joe Christian, but if you do not abide in the gospel, it doesn’t mean a thing!
      - b. he who wears the name but rejects his words is a liar!
        1. as if I claimed to be a disciple of Socrates
          - a. I know nothing of his teachings; I don’t follow any of them so far as I am aware
          - b. calling myself a disciple of Socrates would not make it so
          - c. simply calling myself a disciple of Jesus doesn’t make it so either!
        2. you may fool men, but “the Lord knows those who are His” (2 Tim. 2:19)
          - a. instead of worrying whether or not brother Jeff or brother Alton knows if you are abiding in Christ you should be concerned with what Jesus is seeing in your life
          - b. you might hide any number of things from us but you’ll never hide anything from Him!

### C. Specifically

1. he commands that we believe in him, confess him and render obedience in the waters of baptism for the remission of our sins
2. he commands that we maintain a proper relationship with him through abiding attention and obedience to his will
  - a. he commands that we gather on the first day of the week to worship him publicly
  - b. he commands that we worship him in all that we do every day: Col. 3:17
    1. before doing anything questionable, test it: can I do this in the name of the Lord
    2. can I go to this place of entertainment and take Jesus there with me?
    3. can I stay home on Wednesday night and watch TV with the Lord—or might he be more interested in what is going on over on Wonsley Drive than what is going on at Melrose Place?
  3. it seems like everyone of these lessons comes back to attendance sooner or later
    - a. attendance has been called the barometer of spirituality
      1. if someone’s attendance is poor, the chances are that the rest of their lives is even worse in spiritual terms
      2. attendance is usually the most obvious part of someone’s dedication to God—if it is poor, then he is most often in worse trouble at home and elsewhere
    - b. perhaps though, God’s command to gather to worship is burdensome
      1. alas, God gives us only 168 hours a week, how dare he expect four and a half of them back in the form of assembled worship?—the nerve!
      2. all Jesus did was die for us—how dare he expect us to remember him around the table each Sunday?

3. but you say, “I would never say that or even think that.”
  - a. oh yeah, remember your actions speak louder than your words
  - b. Jesus said to keep his commands—do you do that?
- c. John said that God’s commands are not burdensome in 1 John 5:3
  1. what do your actions say?
  2. Jesus commands that you be here on Sunday morning but you have a house full of company who wants you there—what do you do?
  3. Jesus says be here to study on Sunday night with your brethren but you already spent two and a half hours here this morning and you’re tired—what do you do
    - a. I wonder if Jesus was tired as he hung on that cross
    - b. you know what—he hanged there longer than he expects you to sit here each week!
  4. Jesus says be here on Wednesday night but the kids have school in the morning and you know how important education is—do you really?

### III. The Hardening of Men’s Hearts

#### A. God’s Commands Are Not Burdensome

1. believe, repent, confess and be baptized
2. walk in Christ—be disciples in deed

#### B. Some Are Hardened Against The Gospel Through Lack of Fear of God

1. many hold to a myth that the God will exercise a different kind of mercy upon mankind in judgment than what is described in the Bible
2. if you want to take that chance, maybe you should plan on having a hot time in eternity

#### C. Some Are Hardened Through Disrespect For God’s Messengers

1. many hate to hear sermons that step on their toes—it hurts!
2. they despise the preacher that shows them the insufficiency of their service to God or the foolishness of their rationalizations
3. you can forget who it is that says it to you, if it truth, then it will stand
  - a. if an atheist walked in here and said that homosexuality is sinful, it would be 100% true
  - b. the message is the important thing, not the messenger
  - c. if you find it difficult to accept the truth from me, we’ll talk about that, but don’t reject the truth based on that—it will be your soul that will suffer, not mine

#### D. Some Are Hardened By Personal Desires That Outweigh the Will of God

1. work is necessary but is taking too many away from service to the Lord
2. work at home is important, showing hospitality to company is important, school and homework are important—but not before the work of the Lord
  - a. put services ahead of them and put home Bible study ahead of them
  - b. put the Biblical education of your children ahead of them

#### E. Some Are Hardened By Patience

1. some count God’s patience in allowing them to continue to live until now as a sign that their lack of concern for Him will never catch up with them: Romans 2:4-5
2. others count the patience of the brethren as a sign that they will never be disciplined for walking disorderly; don’t count patience as sign that the situation isn’t urgent, that repentance and an orderly walk can wait a while longer
3. the situation is urgent when your soul is in peril: 1 Tim. 4:2 and Titus 1:16

### Conclusion

You must realize that God has the power to save the obedient and punish the disobedient and choose which group you want to be eternally joined to. “Today, if you will hear his voice, harden not your hearts” but come to the Lord and be added to the saved or take the steps back to them.



# The Constitution of the Church

by J.S. Smith • delivered 4 September 1994 • Austin, Texas

## Introduction

- i. The problems of division among religious people that we face in the world today are nothing new. If we could trace them to one root, perhaps it would be in the attitude of those who do not respect the Bible as the sole Constitution of the church. This attitude is expressed most often in “I know the Bible says that, but I have always felt...”
- ii. The first step in convincing people to respect the Bible and eschew the inventions of man is changing that attitude.

## Discussion

### I. Christ Has All Authority

#### A. Given By God as Prophesied: Isaiah 22:20-23

1. Eliakim (whose name means, “raised up by God”) was a good and trustworthy man in the royal household of good king Hezekiah
  - a. he was entrusted with certain powers in the house and discharged them in an honorable way
  - b. the key of the house of David was figurative language—it described the commitment of certain government power and authority being entrusted to Eliakim
  - c. Eliakim is a type of Christ—that is, a figure, representation, or symbol of something to come, an event in the Old Testament that foreshadows another in the New Testament (American Heritage Dictionary)—or a foreshadowing
2. Christ has this authority by right, not gift
  - a. upon Christ’s shoulders rest the government based in the “throne of David” and his kingdom (Isa. 9:6-7) and which was put there because he is the “Son of the Most High” who reigns “over the house of Jacob forever” (Luke 1:32)
  - b. this description and type-anti-type relationship is verified in Revelation 3:7
  - c. the Jews in the first century claimed the power to shut the doors of the synagogue upon those who confessed Christ and to legislate terms for entrance into the fold, but in reality, it is Christ who opens the door that none can shut and closes the door that none can open

#### B. His Authority: Matt. 28:18-20

1. proclaimed in heaven and on earth over the kings of the earth (Rev. 1:5), over angels and authorities and powers (1 Peter 3:22) and over death and Hades (Rev. 1:18)
2. no one other than Jesus is authorized to make laws for Christians: James 4:12
3. one who would make laws for the church is presumptuous and in rebellion against God, deeming God incapable of making his will known

#### C. The Church’s Constitution

1. just as our country has the Constitution and must abide within it, so the church has the Bible and must abide therein
  - a. United States Constitution provides that it may legally be amended by own articles
  - b. the Bible forbids any amendments
2. the United States has a president and is a democracy (actually, a representative republic)
  - a. the church is a theocracy, with a religious leader at its head
  - b. Christ is the head of the church—executive, judge and sole legislator—prophet, priest and king

### II. Does That Eliminate Apostles?

#### A. Jesus’s Will Was To Be Executed Through Them After His Ascension

1. he would send the Holy Spirit to guide them further: John 14:16-18, 14:26 and 16:7-15
2. Acts shows that the Spirit did arrive and the apostles were so empowered and successful

#### B. Should We Distinguish Between Commands of Christ and Commands of the Apostles?

1. the question is reality is: are the commands given through the apostles of lesser importance than those given directly by Christ?

2. Jesus said that he would send the Spirit to reveal his mind to them
  - a. the apostles were naturally incapable of recalling all that Jesus had taught them
    1. yet, they penned or assisted in the writing of the gospels where his commands are recorded through their inspiration by the Holy Spirit
    2. to discount apostles is to discount the gospel accounts and render the New Testament impotent
  - b. the apostles were not able to receive all that Jesus desired for his body
    1. some teachings had to wait until the plan of God was made clear with his crucifixion
    2. when that happened, the apostles could see more clearly and receive all he desired
    3. this the Holy Spirit revealed to them and they inscribed
      - a. to discount the apostolic works is to diminish the Holy Spirit and Jesus because they are divinely inspired words: Heb. 2:1-4
      - b. their writing are referred to as Scripture by Peter and Paul adds that “all Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable”

### C. The Unity Movements

1. some are based in the assertion that anyone who believes that Jesus Christ is the Son of God is in good standing with God regardless of anything else
  - a. anything recorded after Jesus’s ascension is nice and good but not necessary
  - b. this is the intellectual vacancy that produces the claim that two people can completely disagree and both are right
2. all of these want to make a distinction between gospel and doctrine
  - a. gospel is important and doctrine is not
  - b. all doctrine does then is confuse and incite acrimony

### D. Answering the Question

1. if Jesus is the sole lawgiver for the church, does this eliminate the apostolic writings?
2. Jesus said He would reveal more of his will through the Holy Spirit to apostles after he was gone

## III. Does This Eliminate Men

### A. New Testament Example?

1. find one
2. no uninspired man ever made law for the church in the New Testament

### B. The “Pope”

1. Catholics argue most vehemently that their Popes and Synods are authorized by Jesus to make law on earth
2. they claim that Jesus made Peter the first Pope and lawmaker
3. what about it: Matt. 16:15-19
  - a. upon what rock?: Catholics claim Peter was the rock and the church was built upon him, but notice the words of the Lord:
    1. thou are “Petros”—a large fragment of a still larger rock and upon this “petra”—the still larger rock; Peter was a very important part of the establishment of the kingdom but the church was not constructed upon Him
    2. it was constructed upon the confession that he made—that Jesus was the son of God
  - b. the keys to the kingdom were given to Peter by Christ; just as Eliakim was given the key in Isaiah, so Peter is here
    1. he is not put on par with Christ as lawmaker, though, because he does not have the inherent right to the key as Jesus does—the key was a gift to a servant just like mortal Eliakim
    2. Peter used the keys on Pentecost a short time later to preach the first gospel sermon and set forth the thing necessary to enter the kingdom

## Conclusion

# Pray, Send Laborers

by J.S. Smith • delivered 11 September 1994 • Austin, Texas

## Introduction

- i. Our gospel meeting with \_\_\_\_\_ begins next Sunday. To make this meeting successful, we will have to work hard during the next two weeks. Are you willing to work for Jesus? Do you feel that this meeting is important or not?
- ii. Will you invite anyone to come to the meeting? Will you attend it faithfully yourself?
- iii. Jesus spoke once of a field white for harvest and that field is just as white as ever. But where are the laborers to tend to it and bring fruit from it to Christ? What kind of a laborer are you?

## Discussion

### I. Jesus Said, “Don’t Look Back”: John 4:31-38

#### A. Perceived Hunger

1. the disciples became concerned over the Lord’s perceived hunger
  - a. he did indeed have an insatiable appetite; but it wasn’t for breakfast, lunch and dinner
  - b. Jesus said that he hungered to do the will of the Lord
2. as the disciples gazed into their fields of grain and so on, they anticipated the harvest that was yet far in the future—four months from them—like us looking forward to the middle of January
  - a. their eyes were focused on the physical and the visible
  - b. Jesus wanted them to wipe away the haze of this world so that they could concentrate upon the spiritual focus of a disciple’s life
  - c. look at the field
    1. reminds me of the cotton fields in Alabama about this time of year—looks like it has snowed because it is time to harvest or pick the cotton
    2. the spiritual field Jesus showed them was even at this time white for the harvest
    3. in other words, what are you waiting for?—Get to it!

#### B. Some Probably Replied As These Did On Another Occasion

1. the disciples of Jesus were following with him along a road in Samaria
  - a. one made a confession—a pledge: Luke 9:57
  - b. Jesus told him that that pledge if followed through would take him into some unsavory places and uncomfortable conditions: Luke 9:58
2. Jesus told another what he must do
  - a. he seems to have accepted the instruction to follow the Lord, but he said, wait, there is something I must do first: Luke 9:59
  - b. Jesus saw that his priorities were confused
    1. the man was concerned with elements of the field that were already past harvest instead of the work in the field now
    2. his priority was upon himself and what he wanted to do rather than serving God and telling others about Jesus: Luke 9:60
    3. one other disciple agreed to follow but only after doing what he wanted to do first: Luke 9:61-62

#### C. Perhaps These Disciples Thought That Time Was Plentiful

1. they knew there was a work to do and that it was important, but wanted to wait a little while
2. Jesus said no—if you wait another moment, part of the white field will perish and there will be nothing that anyone can do about what passes away
3. they were boasting in tomorrow—I will do this or that tomorrow: Prov. 27:1 and James 4:13-15

### II. Don’t Look Back!

#### A. The Fields Are Still White For Harvest

1. Jesus spoke of the world at large that was starved for some good news about freedom from sin and hope for eternity
  - a. righteous Jews who were kept under the law realized their ineptitude at keeping the Law completely

- b. righteous Gentiles were surrounded by sin and perversity
- c. like a six inch headline in the Statesman, the Answer had arrived
- d. the work of those who first came to Jesus was to herald that good news from the rooftops and cover the world with joy
- 2. we, like those early disciples can look out our window and see a field white for harvest
  - a. people starving for forgiveness of God and the removal of their guilt
  - b. blind men and women groping about in the darkness searching for some hope in eternity
  - c. suffering people limping through life fraught with illness or sorrow or difficulty
- 3. like them, we realize that a part of this field is composed of our friends, our family, our neighbors
  - a. what will we do with the message they are dying to hear?
  - b. at least put it before them or will we instead never mention Him to them: Matt. 9:36-38
    - 1. do you know someone like this—wandering about in confusion?
    - 2. are you one of the laborers that God sent into the vineyard to work amidst the white harvest?

#### B. The Hope is Ahead, Why Do You Look Back?

- 1. through the preaching of the gospel, Jesus told you to follow him, just as he did in person to some on the Samaritan road
- 2. they pledged to follow him, but it wasn't long at all before they began looking back at other, earthly, temporal concerns
- 3. like Paul said, you must forget "those things which are behind and reach forward to those things which are ahead...press toward the goal of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus (Phil. 3:13-14)
- 4. when you confessed Christ and were baptized into his body, you put your hands to the plow, you must not look back at earthly priorities
  - a. a plowman that loses concentration in the field soon veers off course away from the goal ahead
  - b. one who looks back never accomplishes anything—never bears any fruit at all to the Lord
  - c. Jesus moaned for that wayward plowman who was not fit for the kingdom of God
  - d. in what direction are you heading; upon what is your gaze trained?
    - 1. your job, school, leisure activities like sports and television
    - 2. are you a lazy plowman who spends the daylight hours longing for the slumber of his bed—are you doing your Sunday plowing in bed?
  - e. or are your hands set firmly on the plow, your eyes trained upon the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus, your spirit concentrated upon the souls of those you know well

#### C. Time Is Not Plentiful

- 1. those people whom you have always intended to invite to services but have never gotten around to it have continued to sin against your Father and theirs—doesn't that bother you?
- 2. they have marched a steady course to eternal hell fire—your brother, your cousin, your friendly neighbor—on their way to hell—why won't you help?
- 3. the part of the field Jesus saw white for the harvest is perishing because his laborer has better things to do—he is too busy this week—he will get to tomorrow
  - a. that field is composed of the souls of people you love—will you let them starve and die eternally or will you do what you can?
  - b. put the offer before them
    - 1. if they refuse it, it is not your fault, you have done what you could
    - 2. but what if...what if they accept and come to the gospel meeting next week...what if one day you can call your friend brother...call your relative sister? what if?
  - 3. you will never know unless you try—and worse, souls may perish if you sit by idly and let the devil plant and nourish his weeds in your field

#### Conclusion

Our meeting is six days away. Have you invited anyone yet? Why are your hands off the plow? Jesus has not told you to rest yet!

# Trouble In The Church

by J.S. Smith • delivered 11 September 1994 • Austin, Texas

## Introduction

i. The New Testament is filled with unfortunate examples of trouble in the first century church. For some reason, we think that the twentieth century church should be without trouble. It is right that we work toward that goal, but it should not surprise us when trouble eventually arises.

ii. I have listed four different examples of troublesome situations in the church and I would like to let the scriptures speak to how we should handle them. Take special note of the level of leavening influence in each of the four parts because that is a pivotal factor in how God commands they be handled.

## Discussion

### I. Personal, Private Offenses Between Two Brothers: Matt. 18:15-17

#### A. Keep It That Way If Possible

1. the English reads “...if your brother sins against you...”

a. the Greek carries with it the fact that the sin is not imagined or simply possible

b. it is definite—“...when your brother sins against you...”

2. whatever this offense may be

a. an unkind word, some slight, a heated argument, whatever

b. it is at this time between one brother and one other—it is personal and private and should be kept that way so long as is possible

c. this offense at this point has no leavening effect because it is personal and not public among other Christians and nearby outsiders

3. the offended brother is encouraged to tell the fault to the sinning brother

a. not with the aim of humiliating him or exacerbating the disagreement

b. but with the goal of gaining your brother—convincing him to repent in apology and restitution if necessary that you both may stand blameless before God and walk arm in arm as brothers

#### B. If That Fails

1. enjoin the assistance of two or three witnesses to accompany you again to tell the offending brother his fault

a. these witnesses serve in the role of hearing what the fault is

b. they are present at this second attempt at convincing the sinning brother to repent

2. because the sin has been established to have actually occurred, the witnesses do more than watch idly

a. they join the offended brother in his attempts to gain the sinning one

b. verse 17 pluralizes the speakers in this second attempt—they are speaking to the sinner—the innocent brother and the witnesses are all speaking

#### C. If That Fails

1. if he will not listen to the innocent brother or the witnesses, take it to the church

a. the word church refers to the assembly of saints in a local place that would be established in various locales after Jesus spoke and the kingdom was established (as Matthew wrote, the church was established and local groups were assembling)

b. the church is to act collectively in convincing the sinner to repent and beg forgiveness of his brother and God

2. inherent in this collective action is the obvious consequence if he will not hear the church—this is the last item man may use to convince the sinner to repent

a. the church cannot string him up by his thumbs

b. the church cannot drip water on his forehead to get him to repent

c. if he will not hear the church, he must face the only logical consequence God provides

#### D. If That Fails

1. the offended brother cannot be reconciled to his brother

2. the sinning brother cannot be reconciled to God
3. the church must wash its hands of the situation
  - a. as harsh as it sounds, the sinner is put out
  - b. he is as a heathen and a tax collector—an outsider of low regard

#### E. Summary

1. in the case of a personal, private sin between two brothers, it should be dealt with privately
2. no one other than God knows and it should be rectified if possible in private
3. the offense does not hold the danger of influencing others to fall also if it can be solved privately

### II. Walking Disorderly: 2 Thess. 3:6

#### A. What is The Orderly Tradition of the Apostles?

1. 2 Thessalonians 2:15 clarifies the tradition to be the things that were taught—these are now collected in the canon we call the Bible
  - a. includes a myriad of moral guidelines on sexual behavior, interpersonal relationships, and worship practices
  - b. the New Testament is the pattern of which Paul desires all should follow
2. an orderly walk is illustrated in the march of soldiers who must walk in step as they are commanded

#### B. What Is Walking Disorderly?

1. like a soldier marching against the cadence of the commander
  - a. Thayer defines a disorderly walk as one that is out of ranks and irregular
  - b. this brother is “deviating from the prescribed order or rule” of the New Testament
  - c. in this case, the sin of idleness is especially condemned
  - d. elsewhere, one man is withdrawn from for sexual immorality; any variation from New Testament pattern is deserving of discipline
2. the sin is not suspected or simply possible—it is fully established to be true
  - a. the disorderly brother is walking disorderly as he walks in sin
    1. he walks in sin either by establishing a pattern of a sinful life or
    2. he walks in sin by refusing to repent
  - b. there is not doubt among his brethren that he is living in sin
    1. his sin may have a leaving influence on his brethren
      - a. one who sins and yet seems to live comfortably in the fellowship passively induces others to consider his sin an option
        1. (nothing happened to him and nothing will happen to me, either
        2. like the situation at Corinth where sin was permitted to continue and poison the church as a whole as others condoned the incestuous adultery
      - b. for this reason, the brethren must withdraw from him that he may be ashamed: 2 Thess. 3:14-15
        1. so that others will not consider joining him
        2. so that the world will have nothing to accuse the church with (Titus 2:8)
        3. so that he may repent and return in humility
    - c. this is not a private matter like Matthew 18 addresses—it is very public

### III. False Teachers

#### A. Teach Against Pattern Again

1. pattern is composed of will of Christ in the New Testament: 2 Thess. 2:15 and 2 Tim. 1:13
2. like Elymas who seek to turn men away from Christ, false teachers seek to “...pervert the straight ways of the Lord” (Acts 13:10).
3. they preach “...a different gospel, which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ” (Gal. 1:6-7)

#### B. They Have A Direct and Powerful Leavening Influence

1. their influence is immediate and has an unmistakable impact on those they deceive

2. false teaching breeds false beliefs and misdirected faith or worship: 2 Tim. 2:14
3. it spreads among the disciples like cancer: 2 Tim. 2:16-17
  - a. on their walk, these two had strayed concerning the truth and were overthrowing the faith of those who gave them a hearing
  - b. cancer begins in a single, tiny pocket and then spreads throughout the body until contamination is widespread and debilitating
4. doctors urge us to check for cancerous lumps in our bodies often so that we may find the cancer quickly and eliminate it before it diseases any more of the body
  - a. thus are we to handle a cancer on the body of Christ, the church
  - b. false teaching is just such a cancer: Gal. 1

#### C. When Evidence Is Clear, Operate

1. if one is found to be preaching another gospel, “let him be accursed“ (Gal. 1:9)
2. when Peter was troubling Gentile Christians in Antioch by behaving against what he knew to be true, Paul operated: Gal. 2:11-14
  - a. he withstood him to the face in the presence of all so that the situation would be corrected and the leaven would be removed immediately and completely
  - b. this is not a private matter like Matthew 18 addresses—this is very public

#### IV. Factious People

##### A. These Promote Their Own Agenda, Not Christ’s

1. they seek to introduce a wedge into the brotherhood
  - a. for some personal reason or ambition
  - b. they go about trying to divide two brothers or an entire congregation or the church universal even
    2. they do not seek the good of the kingdom
      - a. but rather the good of themselves
      - b. damage is done to the cause of Christ because of their work
        1. two brothers no longer feel brotherly toward one another
        2. congregations split down the middle as all are forced to take sides when the only side should be the Lord’s
      3. some churches follow the factious man off into apostasy and the universal church is reduced in number of saved

##### B. Leavening Is Their Central Goal!

1. this is not a private matter like Matthew 18 addresses—it is very public
  - a. it is filled with the need to influence others with their agenda
  - b. the word factious or divisive has the obvious implication that they are attempting to affect others: Rom. 16:17-18
2. those who are causing divisions and offenses contrary to sound doctrine among brethren are to be noted or marked; further they are to be avoided
  - a. like leaven and cancer, their work is a communicable disease that will soon plague a church if not quarantined quickly
    - b. they need little time to drive a wedge between brethren
    - c. they do not serve Jesus in spreading the gospel
      1. they work to satisfy their own desires and agenda
      2. the factious dress their heresy up in smooth words and charm those unequipped to see through the disguise; soon sides are drawn and brethren can no longer walk together
      3. factious men are a menace to the kingdom

##### C. They Are to Be Admonished: Titus 3:10-11

1. exhort them to cease their divisive speech and work
2. admonish him once and then again if he continues
3. if he still continues, then he is to be quarantined before he does any further damage
  - a. Paul tells us to mark him and avoid him because he is subverted (warped, corrupted, changed)

for the worse—Thayer)

b. what he is doing is sinning—not privately, but very publicly; not against any one person, but against the whole body

c. you do not condemn him by marking him—he has condemned himself by attacking the body for personal gain

4. this is obviously a different situation than what Matthew 18 covers

a. the sin there was private, between two brothers and the church was ignorant of it

b. the sinner received admonitions on at least three occasions, here he gets just two:

leavening!—there was none in Matthew 18, here there is nothing but

c. the discipline is quick and decisive

d. the result is the same, though: he is cast out

### **Conclusion**

There is always some trouble somewhere. If we deal with it as God has instructed, we will survive with minimal damage. If we choose to do it our way, then we are destined for failure. The first part has little to do with the other three. The last three must be handled quickly lest a little leaveneth the whole lump, contaminating the whole church. Cecil has told me that the most valuable lesson he learned from the trouble here a few years ago is that these troubles should be handled quickly before the cancer spreads and takes a large chunk out of the body.

# Surviving Temptation (Part One)

by J.S. Smith • delivered 25 September 1994 • Austin, Texas

## Introduction

i. Chances are that every day you face a temptation to disobey the will of God. We should not take temptation lightly. Every time that we are faced with temptation, it is a defining moment in our relationship with God. When we disobey God and sin, we have failed the one who died for us and we ought to be ashamed. Sin ought to be avoided at all times at any cost. You must apply the word of God to your life and rise above temptation.

## Discussion

### I. Where Do Temptations Come From?

#### A. Some Say From God

1. I have heard people facing divorce or death or any number of things wondering why God has done this to them— “somebody up there doesn’t like me.”

2. this is ludicrous and insulting to the God who seeks only the good of his creation

3. this is ignorance of the nature of God and the nature of man

a. God has absolutely no fellowship, no relationship with evil

b. he did not give us a sinful nature with an inclination to rebel against him

c. if we understand this as God’s goal, it can not be reconciled that he is working on both sides of the equation—that he is working both to tempt us to disobey him and urging us to obey him: 1 Tim. 2:3-4

d. “God is light and in him is no darkness at all” (1 John 1:5).

e. “His work is honorable and glorious: and his righteousness endures forever” (Psalm 111:3).

1. if I were to pin up a picture of a naked woman in front of a room full of teenage boys—tempting them—no one would be able to say that my work is honorable, glorious or righteous

2. if God is the tempter of men, then how could the psalmist say it

f. the idea that God tempts men is a vestige of Calvinism

1. that God causes every act of man and nature to occur—both what is good and what is evil

2. that is wrong—God cannot commit evil

g. were it true that God tempts you, then God is guilty of the sin of being a stumbling block and must stand condemned—who can believe it?

h. God’s role in temptation is that he sets forth the law for you to obey or disobey, he limits that temptation to a level which you can survive if you choose and he provides the way of escape on your behalf

1. God is the friend in temptation, not the enemy

2. if you don’t understand that, how can you be wise enough to seek his comfort

#### B. Some Say The Devil

1. old expression after someone committed sin was *the devil made me do it*

2. well, the devil has never made anybody do anything

a. consider the three prime Biblical examples of devilish temptation

1. in the garden of Eden: Gen. 3:1-6

2. in the days of Job: Job 1:6-12

3. in the wilderness: Matt. 4:1-11

b. did the devil force any of these four to do anything, right or wrong?

c. no, he employed means in our lives as inducements, but he could not, as God does not, force his will upon anyone (free moral agency)

### II. The Process of Temptation

#### A. God’s Role (James 1:12-13)

1. the Lord has promised reward to those who survive the temptations of the this life

2. there are obstacles on a Christian’s path, but no one is tempted by God

a. again, the tenets of Calvinism embraced by the Baptists and most other denominations, include the concept of reprobation—that man is created with a sinful nature to rebel against God, the idea of predestination—that God causes everything in the world to happen including temptations and sins

b. if these be true, then indeed God tempts man because he puts that centerfold in front of you and he put up the billboard with the naked woman lying on the beach with a cigarette hanging out of her mouth

c. God has nothing to do with evil

1. when Jesus was crucified, he took the sins of the world on his back, and God could not look upon him as he hung on the cross; Jesus cried, why have you forsaken me?

2. God could not look upon the evil that Jesus selflessly carried that day

#### B. The Real Process: How and When Does Temptation Occur? (James 1:14-16)

1. a man is drawn away by his own ἐπιθυμία or lusts (KJV), or “desire for what is forbidden” (Thayer)

2. this man is tempted when he desires something that God says he may not have

a. I may desire alcohol or sex with another woman or man or my neighbor’s car; I may desire to stay home on Sunday night or all together

b. that desire is evil and it should be fought with every ounce of energy I can muster

c. if permitted to dance upon the stage of the mind, those desires will woo my conscience, my senses and my wisdom until I am convinced that I may act upon them or until my mind is filled with nothing but sin

3. when I allow this to happen, I have been enticed

a. perhaps James was a fisherman because the word he uses at the end of verse 14 literally means that he has been baited and hooked

b. like that rainbow trout that swims and attacks the worm on the end of your pole, a man can swim right at whatever tempting desire he sees and chomp down on it—he’s hooked and like that trout, he’s in trouble—he’s lunch

4. he’s hooked or enticed because desire has conceived and given birth to sin

a. desire unchecked will invariably result in sin

b. and we know that the wages of sin are death (Rom. 6:23)

1. often physically and unless corrected, always spiritually

2. Achan was a slave of desire—“When I saw among the spoil a beautiful Babylonian mantle, and 200 shekels of silver and a wedge of gold of fifty shekels weight, I *coveted* them and *took* them” (Joshua 7:21)

#### D. The Truth About God (James 1:17-18)

1. all good things come from God; there is no variation from this

2. unlike the lights of the sky, his shadow never turns to sending evil

3. God brought us unto salvation through his plan

### Conclusion

We’ll see tonight how to resist temptation.

# Surviving Temptation (Part Two)

by J.S. Smith • delivered 25 September 1994 • Austin, Texas

## Introduction

i. Chances are that every day you face a temptation to disobey the will of God. We should not take temptation lightly. Every time that we are faced with temptation, it is a defining moment in our relationship with God. When we disobey God and sin, we have failed the one who died for us and we ought to be ashamed. Sin ought to be avoided at all times at any cost. You must apply the word of God to your life and rise above temptation.

## Discussion

### I. The First Step in Resisting the Temptation is Identifying What It Is

#### A. Get the Image James Used of that Fishing Pole and the Bait

1. you're swimming around in the world and the devil's got his fishing pole in the water all around you

2. what's at the end of that pole to tempt you

3. the fish has trouble resisting that worm, what do you have trouble turning away from?

a. there are many baits that grab my notice and entice me to swim in their direction

b. I know it is the same for you, too

c. is it alcohol or drugs, greed for money or possessions, sexual lust?

d. I guarantee there is something dangling at the end of that fishing pole that you want

#### B. Don't Deny That

1. admit it, identify it and avoid it

2. that fish would live on if he were wise enough to stay away from the bait

3. you will live on spiritually if you exercise the wisdom of God to shun illicit desires

### II. The Second Step Is To Choose Whom You Want To Follow

#### A. When the Bait is Before You, You Must Decide if You Will Pursue It

1. when that bait presents itself, you must decide to serve God or Satan

a. if you choose to follow God, you must resist the temptation by all means

b. if you choose not to resist and just give in to the temptation, you are following Satan

2. and James says when sin is committed, it brings forth death, do not be deceived, my beloved brethren

#### B. Satan Offers a Road for You to Walk

1. he will make it look pleasant and inviting

a. he dresses up fornication to be a beautiful experience between two people who love each other

b. he can make beer look tasty and healthy

c. he can make your neighbor's oxen (his car or wife or wheelbarrow) look like something you can't live without

d. he can make homosexuality look like an equally scriptural lifestyle choice

e. he can make staying in bed on Sunday morning and watching TV on Wednesday nights look harmless

2. he will lie to you

a. Satan lied to Adam and Eve: "Thou shalt not surely die."

b. he will tell you that God won't care; that God won't punish one as good as you

c. he will tell you that you were baptized and that you have an insurance policy that makes you immune from judgment if you sin

1. some of you have the idea that when you were baptized you bought a no-fault insurance policy

a. like buying car insurance or health insurance

b. is this true of you?

2. we have the concept of temptation and sin that it is bad and we should stay away from it, but don't worry if you fall

a. if it is something you really want to do, go ahead, you have insurance

- b. Paul asked, “Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?”
- c. many Christians practically say yes—I have insurance
  - 1. I know dancing is wrong, but I really want to go to the prom, and besides I am a Christian—I have sin insurance
  - 2. I know lust is wrong, but I really want to watch General Hospital or that R-rated movie—and besides I have insurance
  - 3. I know it is wrong to cheat, but one time won’t hurt—I was baptized, I ought to be covered for at least that much
    - 3. when you buy car insurance, do you immediately feel free to run out and drive 90 miles an hour along Mopac at rush hour, weaving among traffic and on the shoulder
    - 4. when you buy health insurance, do you then feel free to start smoking and drinking or jamming a screw driver into your ear?
    - 5. no, so why do you think of Christ in that way
      - a. I was baptized so that I can sin without consequences
      - b. I don’t have to take the devil seriously or temptation seriously—I have insurance
      - c. that is the wrong idea about Christ and baptism—if that’s why you were baptized, then you were not baptized for the remission of sins but for the immunity to live in sin
        - 1. your insurance policy is printed in invisible ink on paper that can’t be found
        - 2. your time is up—you need to be baptized for the remission of your sins or be prepared for the consequences
        - 3. he will twist the Scriptures

#### C. God Offers You a Road to Walk: James 4:7-8

- 1. submit to God—the commands of God, understand the will of the Lord and do it
- 2. resist the devil and he will flee from you
  - a. don’t do like Adam and Eve did: Eve was deceived, be on guard because that worm is attached to a hook that spells death for you
  - b. Adam was not deceived, he understood, he just didn’t care
  - c. do like Job did (trust in God and ever forsake him—he hasn’t forsaken you)
  - d. do like Jesus did (appeal to the word of God and stay within it)
- 3. draw near to God (pray, study, ask for family help and cast burdens on Lord): 1 Cor. 10:13
  - a. understand that this temptation has arisen for others—nothing new
  - b. God will not permit you to be tempted beyond what you are able to resist
    - 1. when you encounter temptation, you can resist
    - 2. you can have overcome if you follow God’s wisdom
    - 3. God will provide the way of escape that you might bear it
      - a. he won’t always make it disappear
      - b. he will provide a way to survive it, though
      - c. oftentimes, the way of escape is simply to avoid where it is
      - d. it is there but you must look for it and walk it

#### **Conclusion**

Take sin seriously and take temptation seriously. Resist them.

# Understand The Will of God

by J.S. Smith • delivered 2 October 1994 • Austin, Texas

## Introduction

i. The world is a confusing place. For everything that one person says is right and true, there always seems to be another person who says something else is right and true and that the first person is wrong. This is true in everything from politics to football. When we discuss the Bible, often times, this aroma of confusion wafts over the study and we begin to accept the concept that Biblical truth is either not knowable or not agreeable. When we accept that, we insult the God of the Bible who rightfully claims no authorship when it comes to confusion. Jesus said that when you abide in his word, truth is knowable and powerful (John 8:31-2). The truth is we can understand God's word if we will examine it. Some aspects of the mind of God are not fully revealed in the Bible and dwelling upon them will only engender confusion but of those things which the Book discusses, we can know and understand them.

## Discussion

### I. From Darkened Understanding to Enlightened Minds

#### A. Before Christ

1. I walked in the futility of my mind: Eph. 4:17-18
  - a. I did not seek truth in the word of God but rather inside myself
  - b. the moral guidelines I operated with were not divine but artificial and self-serving
  - c. I supposed my salvation to come from God based upon the fact that I was basically a good person
    1. although I engaged in sins of the flesh, I did so less than others and not to what I deemed excess, so I was probably good enough for heaven
    2. I believed in God and prayed whenever I really wanted something
    3. I believed in a merciful God and chose not to discuss a vengeful God
    4. I viewed the Bible as a big book full of good advice and much like my father's advice, I could choose to take it or leave it without risk in either case—I was wrong on both
  - d. in the futility of my mind, I created a system of salvation to rival God's
2. I walked with darkened understanding
  - a. I permitted my mind to meditate upon evil which endangered my soul and body
  - b. my citizenship was not in heaven, though I supposed it to be—my mind was set on earthly things (Phil. 3:19-20)
  - c. I had not been raised with Christ and although I desired the things that were above, I did not seek them. My mind was set on things on the earth, not things above (Col. 3:1-2)
  - d. I was foolish, not understanding the will of the Lord (Eph. 5:17)
3. I was alienated from the life of God
  - a. Paul speaks throughout Ephesian letter of mystery of gospel: Eph. 1:9-14 and 3:3-6
  - b. the mystery of the gospel spoken of here was that Gentiles who had walked after their own created Gods would now be grafted into the vine of Christ by the gospel—those who were formerly aliens from God could now become fellow citizens in God's family (Eph. 3:19-22)
  - c. when I was not yet a Christian, I was still a stranger and a foreigner on the outside of the walls surrounding God's people

#### B. With Christ

1. I walked in the power of the gospel
  - a. my personal scheme of salvation was buried with a million other futile systems
  - b. I trust in God's plan of redemption instead of within myself
  - c. the moral guidelines I operate with are divine and God serving
  - d. I understand my salvation to come from God based upon his grace and my obedience to it (2 Thess. 1:8)
1. I no longer engage in sins of the flesh
2. I believe in God and prayed everywhere and without ceasing
3. I trust in a merciful God and fear a vengeful God (Heb. 10:31 and 13:8)
4. I view the Bible as the undisputable will of God and commit myself to abiding in it
2. I walk with enlightened understanding

- a. I focus my mind on things above: Phil. 4:8 for my citizenship is in heaven (Phil. 3:20)
  - b. I am raised with Christ and walk in newness of life: Eph. 4:22-23
  - c. I understand the will of the Lord (Eph. 5:17)
3. I am no longer a stranger from the life of God: Eph. 3:19-22

## II. I Can Know What To Do “In The Lord”

### A. In My General Life

- 1. the word of God tells me to love God first and put everything else behind that
  - a. whatever I do, I must give his service top priority: Luke 14:26-27
  - b. I make no decision without divine approval of my actions: Col. 3:17
- 2. I must love and honor those about me
  - a. my neighbor as myself (Mark 12:31)
  - b. my brethren in Christ: Phil. 2:3-4
  - c. my wife: Eph. 5:28
  - d. my children: Eph. 6:4
  - e. my parents: Eph. 6:1
- 3. must be at peace with all men as I am able in the Lord (Heb. 12:14): Rom. 12:9-21

### B. In Worship

- 1. God commands that I assemble with the saints at every opportunity: Heb. 10:24-25
- 2. I follow the approved example of meeting on the first day of the week to eat of the Lord’s Supper and meditate upon the blood and body of Christ (Acts 20:7 and 1 Cor. 11)
- 3. I can know that God accepts the fruit of the sacrifice of my lips as I sing songs unto Him (Eph. 5:19 and Col. 3:16) and speak to him in prayer (1 Thess. 5:17)
- 4. I can understand that I must have fellowship in his work by returning to him a portion of what he has given to me in the collection each week (1 Cor. 16)
- 5. I know all this from studying his word every day and learning each Sunday as the saints assemble to open the Bible together (Acts 20:7)
- 6. anything other than what I see in Scripture is merely an artificial attempt at pleasing God without his approval and I remember how it was to walk in darkened understanding serving the futility of my own imagination—I prefer to abide in the scriptures

## III. I Can Know Who Will Be Saved

### A. Some Will Not: Matt. 7:13-14

- 1. the broad gate is crowded
- 2. the kingdom of heaven is closed to some, I understand (Rom. 1:28-32, 1 Cor. 6:9-10, Gal. 5:19-21, 2 Thess. 1:5-9, 1 Peter 4:17-18 and Rev. 21:8)

### B. But Some Will: Matt. 7:13-14, 21

- 1. he who obeys the gospel
- 2. take the example of the eunuch: hear the truth and believe it, turn from sin (Eph. 4:21-24), confess Jesus as Lord, be baptized, walk by faith until the end
- 3. it is road less traveled for a reason—it requires a sincere and incorruptible commitment

## Conclusion

Won’t you make that commitment today? Walk to the narrow gate and take your first steps on the straight path to heaven.

# What Shall We Do For Lost Sheep?

by J.S. Smith • delivered 2 October 1994 • Austin, Texas

## Introduction

i. The background for Matthew 18 is a dispute among the apostles over who would be the greatest in the kingdom Jesus was about to establish. They perceived it as an earthly kingdom and possessed poor attitudes about their place in it. Jesus begins the chapter by discussing the attitude of one who would enter his fold. He then laments the fact that some sheep get lost and wander away from the shepherd and the fold. He then tells the parable about regaining the lost sheep.

ii. In the fold of Christ, Jesus is the Chief Shepherd and the elders are local shepherds under his lead (1 Peter 5:1-4). The elders exercise great responsibility in the fold of Christ. Elders are also called stewards of God's household in Titus 1:7.

iii. In 1 Corinthians 4:1-2, he speaks of those who would preach the word of God as stewards also. As elders and preachers function in the fold of God, they must be found faithful to his will and keep watch for the wolves that would steal away a sheep (Acts 20:29) or the lures that may cause a sheep to wander. A preacher must "take heed to [himself] and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this [he] will save both [himself] and those who hear [him]" (1 Timothy 4:16). Indeed, we all have a responsibility to each other as sheep in Jesus's fold.

## Discussion

### I. The Lord's Fold: Matthew 18:1-5

#### A. Requirements for Entry

##### 1. Jesus says that you must be converted

a. conversion is a turning from one way of life to another

b. in this context, Jesus wanted a conversion from a physically-focused life full of pride and concentrated in personal ambition rather than the good of the spirit

##### 2. Jesus demands that a person come to him and become like a child

a. exhibit the good qualities of a child like trust and humility and love

b. to enter the fold, a person must humble himself and submit to Jesus's will

#### B. What are the Sheep Like?: Mark 6:34

1. they once were wandering wild sheep, but hungered for a compassionate shepherd

2. they rejoiced when the Good Shepherd stood before them

3. they didn't follow him for material gain, but for the words of life he feeds them with

4. Matthew 25 talks of the judgment when the sheep (the saved) will be separated from the goats (the condemned) based upon the way in which a person has lived his life according to the Lord's will

### II. Why Do Jesus's Sheep Get Lost?: Matthew 18:6-9

#### A. Offenses Must Come

##### 1. some sheep have their faith solidified while others watch their faith waver

a. trials can eat away at the child-like qualities necessary to entering the fold

b. the sheep may begin to distrust the Shepherd and consider wandering off

##### 2. offense may be personal problems among sheep within in the fold

a. may be worldly enticements like alcohol and lust and greed or pride

b. may be sorrows of life like death, illness and divorce that cause some sheep to question the

Shepherd's lead

c. can be family problems that press upon minds to the exclusion of the guidance of the Shepherd

#### B. Boredom

1. worn out zeal

2. fading hope and concern

#### C. The Sheep Aren't Getting Fed

1. Jesus instructed Peter to feed his sheep just before Chief Shepherd ascended

2. Paul told Ephesian elders to pastor the flock in Acts 20—to feed Jesus's sheep

3. sometimes the sheep aren't getting fed and there should be no surprise when some of them begin to wander among the goats; still no excuse for the sheep in the day of separation

#### D. The Result

1. woe unto the one who entices the sheep to leave the fold
2. there is no excuse for the sheep if it decides to wander away

### III. What Shall We Do For His Lost and Perishing Sheep?: Matthew 18:12-14

#### A. Decisions

1. a shepherd who finds that one of them has wandered off must decide what to do about it
2. make no mistake—a sheep that has wandered away from the fold is lost and it is perishing

#### B. Options

1. the shepherd can just let the sheep go
  - a. after all, he still has 99% of his fold; besides, maybe he'll come back on his own
  - b. forget the fact that the sheep is out of the protection of the fold and easy prey to the wolves
2. find the sheep and kill it
  - a. after all the sheep misbehaved and caused the shepherd and the rest of the fold great concern and inconvenience
  - b. he should be punished—at least, cast him away from the fold completely and eternally
  - c. never let that wandering sheep come back again
  - d. he is in effect as good as dead—left outside the fold for wolves to chew on
3. search for lost sheep, find him and guide him back to the safety of the fold
  - a. show that little one of the Lord that relief from whatever the offense is is only found in the warmth of the fold of the Good Shepherd
  - b. the Good Shepherd and the other sheep can help subdue worldly lusts, incite new interest and spiritual vitality
  - c. he can offer words of precious comfort
    1. "Come to me, all you who labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest" (Matt. 11:28).
    2. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).
    3. Jesus can counsel any problem, great or small

#### C. Solution

1. we are the Chief Shepherd's stewards in the flock
2. if we do nothing and sit idly by while his sheep wander away, we are also at fault and will be held accountable
3. it profits nothing to kill that weak or errant sheep for he or she is lost now
  - a. killing him will only insure that he will be lost forever
  - b. our goal is to guide that wayward sheep back to the Good Shepherd
4. we must seek him and show him the security of the fold

#### D. Outcomes

1. joy in heaven if that sheep returns to the fold
2. if he insists on wandering among the goats and indulging in their habits, eventually the Shepherd will have no choice but to leave him there and return to the important work with the 99 content to remain in the fold

### **Conclusion**

If you are a wandering sheep, won't you come to the Good Shepherd today?

# Glorify God

by J.S. Smith • delivered 9 October 1994 • Austin, Texas

## Introduction

i. The question is often raised, “What are people looking for in religion?” or a person searching for meaning in life inquires, “Why am I here? What is my purpose in life?”. The Bible answers that question most clearly: to glorify God. But, what does that mean?

ii. 1 Corinthians 10:31 says whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. We need to know what is involved in glorifying God since that is our purpose on earth. We shall go to the Bible for the answer and find that seeking this answer is the responsibility of every man.

## Discussion

### I. The Duty of Man

#### A. To Glorify God

##### 1. Define Glorify

a. “to magnify, extol, praise, honor, recognize God as Creator, Savior and Ruler and to do his will; express recognition of all this”

b. it is more than plastering bumper stickers on your car or saying that you glorify God in words

2. one must reverence God, pay homage to a higher being; Psalm 111 (and Lev. 2:9)

3. only God is worthy of this respect (Matt. 4:10 and John 4:24)

#### B. Current Societal Tendency

1. a disrespect of God is evident all around us

a. cohabitation: unmarried people living together, sanctioned by Austin

b. abortion: killing of innocent people, sanctioned by United States

c. homosexuality: unnatural fornication, sanctioned by Austin

d. humanism: man is god and all answers are found by searching heart, sanctioned by schools and therapists

e. evolution: there is no God—He is a myth; universe is an accident; sanctioned by schools

f. radical feminism: roles of men and women commanded by God are to be eliminated; sanctioned by denominations and some liberal churches

g. moral relativism: right and wrong are bordered by large gray areas where things can be made right in certain situations (man seeks prostitute because wife refuses him)

2. but to glorify God is to revere truth: 1 Peter 4:11, John 8:32 (cf. Eph. 3:4 and 1 Thess. 5:21)

3. there is a standard that determines what we should do

a. if we practice something not in the Standard, we must eliminate it

b. faith only and once saved-always saved have no basis in the standard

### II. Truth is the Reference Point

#### A. By This We May Prove All Things

1. concerning divorce and remarriage, salvation, morality

2. while talk shows put filthy ideas in our minds, while soap operas desensitize us to the emetic effect sin should have on us, the word of God show us where God would have us go

#### B. Some Want to Change the Reference Point

1. from scripture to feelings (“I feel this would work better” or “I have always felt that it doesn’t really matter”)

2. in divorce and remarriage, unscripturally remarrying person says, “I know God would want me to be happy.”

a. sure, but is there any happiness in violating God’s clear will?

b. is there any joy in walking the expressway to hell?

c. same for homosexuals and revised salvationists

d. we must respect their level of sincerity

### III. Practical Ways to Revere God and Respect His Truth

#### A. Control Our Bodies

1. you were redeemed at a steep price: 1 Cor. 9:27 and 6:20
2. atmosphere of carnality, sensuality, instant gratification are ministered to
  - a. "scratch where it itches"
  - b. "if it feels good, do it"
3. immodest dress, sexual jokes and entendre, unwed pregnancy, divorce, fornication merit no blush or uncomfortableness any more
  - a. it is so widespread
  - b. you can bring back your ability to blush
    1. turn it off
    2. turn off the stream of desensitization and exercise your godly senses instead (Hebrews 5)
4. your body was not given to you for fornication: 1 Thess. 4:3 and 1 Cor. 6:17-20

#### B. Glorify God in Your Works: Eph. 2:8-10 and Matt. 5:14-16

1. suffer for God: 1 Peter 4:16
  - a. slander
  - b. ridicule
  - c. misrepresentation
2. like the martyrs of the first century
  - a. like John, Stephen, Paul, Peter and James stood for the Lord and died for him
  - b. their deaths were to the glory of Christ
  - c. if a man were to come in here right now and put a gun to my throat and tell me he was going to kill me unless I said Jesus is not the son of God, what should I do?
    1. I can tell you what those five men would have done
    2. I can tell you I should do the same thing and I would

#### C. Glorify God in the Church: Eph. 3:20-21

1. it is his church, not mine or yours (Matt. 16:18)
2. those in the church are the saved (Acts 2:47), saved through faith by the grace of God and their obedience to his gospel (1 Peter 4:17)
3. artificial religious organizations disrespect God and his ability to make his will known

### **Conclusion**

Obey him today (Eccl.12:13).

# When The Watchtower Comes Knocking

by J.S. Smith • delivered 9 October 1994 • Austin, Texas

## Introduction

i. I recently had the experience of opening my front door to a man and a young boy that represented the “Watch Tower Society.” This was not the first time I had been approached by this group, so I was aware of the name they used to use more frequently—the Jehovah’s Witnesses. They gave me a couple of magazines to read and asked if I would like to talk in the future. I said, yes, please come back. Two months have gone by and I am still waiting. Why, I can only guess. Perhaps they figures out that I knew too much.

ii. What do you do when they or some other group sends representatives to your door? We should be prepared for when they do—that we might turn the tables and teach them the truth.

## Discussion

### I. Early History

#### A. Russellism

1. mixture of Universalism, Materialism, Unitarianism, and Adventism, founded by Charles Taze Russell in 1884

a. he taught that Jesus and the apostles came to this earth in October of 1874 and have been here ever since

b. theories were advanced under the title, “Millennial Dawn”

c. name Jehovah’s Witnesses was adopted in 1931

2. the founder’s character

a. sued for divorce by his wife and was found to have defrauded her by transferring \$317,000 of their money to the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society to keep it from her

b. divorce was granted on grounds of his “unmanly conduct and familiarity with other women”

c. court records quote him as describing himself: “I am like a jellyfish; float around her and there; I touch this one and that one, and if she responds, I take her to me, and if not, I float to others.”

3. Russell died in 1916 but his cause lived on

a. Judge J.F. Rutherford became president of the sect

b. Rutherford’s writings used part of Russell’s dogma but supplanted Russell’s theories in the denomination

#### B. Rutherford’s Workers

1. all members who meet in local “Kingdom Halls” are required to give stated hours of time to witnessing or proclaiming the doctrines of Russellism

a. “Pioneers” are full-time workers

b. “Special Pioneers” give 175 hours per month

c. “General Pioneers” give 150 hours per month

2. the literature flows from a Brooklyn press and in 1948, the door-to-door witnesses distributed 20 million books, 12 million magazines, 18 million tracts and 218,000 Bibles

#### C. Christ Came in 1918

1. Rutherford was sentenced to prison in 1918 for refusing to support the government in World War I

2. Rutherford said that “Christ came to the temple of Jehovah” and that the rest of us just don’t see him

3. Rutherford reorganized his movement in 1922 and began sending out the publishers and pioneers to our doorsteps with arms full of tracts and magazines published by the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society

### II. Peculiar Beliefs

#### A. Deny The Deity of Christ

1. do not believe Jesus was God with us (Matt. 1:23) and refuse John 1:11

a. Witnesses comment that Jesus was “a powerful godlike one” in their book, *The Truth That leads to Eternal Life*.

b. They say, “As he is the highest of Jehovah’s creation, so also he was the first, the direct creation of God, the only begotten” (*Studies in the Scriptures*, Vol. 5, page 84).

c. Bible shows his deity: Isa. 7:14 and 9:6, John 1:1-14, 20:28; Col. 2:9, Phil. 2:5-9, 1 Tim. 3:15

## 2. deny his resurrection

a. “Our Lord’s human body was, however, supernaturally removed from the tomb, because had it remained there, it would have been an insurmountable obstacle to the faith of his disciples. We know nothing about what became of it, except that it did not decay or corrupt. Whether it was dissolved into gases, or whether it is still preserved somewhere as the grand memorial of God’s love, of Christ’s obedience, and of our redemption, no one knows; nor is such knowledge necessary” (*Studies in the Scriptures*, Vol. 2, pages 125-130).

b. “It was necessary, not only that the man Christ Jesus should die, but just as necessary that the man Christ Jesus should never live again, should remain dead, should remain our ransom-price for all eternity” (*Studies in the Scriptures*, Vol. 5, page 443).

3. teach polytheism, that Jesus is a lesser god; therefore, Jehovah’s Witnesses teach a pantheon of gods with varying degrees of power

## B. Deny the Deity of the Holy Spirit

### 1. personality of Spirit is denied by Jehovah’s Witnesses

a. describe him as “God’s active force” (*Let God Be True*, page 108 and *The Truth That Leads to Eternal Life*, page 24).

b. deny that Father, son and Spirit constitute the Godhead by teaching that neither the Spirit nor the Son is God and teach that Jesus is just a created being and the Spirit is merely an active force

c. deny that he is a separate personality from God the Father

### 2. Holy Spirit has personality

a. speaks (1 Tim. 4:1), witnesses (John 15:26), teaches (John 14:26), and guides (John 16:12-13)

b. has mind (Rom. 8:27), knowledge (1 Cor. 2:11), affection (Rom. 15:30) and will (1 Cor. 12:11)

c. can be grieved (Eph. 4:30), despised (Heb. 10:29), blasphemed (Matt. 12:31-32), resisted (Acts 7:51) and lied to (Acts 5:3)

### 3. has attributes of deity

a. eternity (Heb. 9:14), omniscience (1 Cor. 2:10-11), omnipotence (Micah 3:8), and omnipresence (Psalm 139:7-10)

b. called God in Acts 5:3

## C. Deny That Man Has An Immortal Soul

1. when a person dies, no part of him continues to live; they believe that the dead are not conscious (*Watchtower*, June 15, 1994)

2. but the Bible teaches that man has a soul that survives the death of his body (Matt. 10:28, Acts 2:27, Rev. 6:9, 20:4 and James 5:20)

a. the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31)

b. the scriptures reveal that a person can be “absent from the body but at home with God” (2 Cor. 4:16-5:20)

c. Paul actually desired to die in order that he might be at home with Christ (Phil. 1:21-24)

d. Jesus described Abraham, Isaac and Jacob as living in spite of the fact that their bodies had been dead for centuries (Matt. 22:32)

e. Peter teaches that man has an immortal spirit (1 Peter 3:4)

## D. Deny The Existence of Hell

1. despite the fact that Jesus spoke about the subject more than any one in the Bible (Matt. 5:22 and 29, 10:28, 18:9, 23:15, Mark 9:43, 45 and 47 and Luke 12:5)

### 2. Jesus described it

a. “outer darkness” (Matt. 8:12 and 22:13)

b. “place of pain” (Rom. 2:5, 8-9)

c. “place of fire and brimstone” (Rev. 21:8)

d. a fate worse than death without mercy” (Heb. 10:29)

e. place of torment” (Rev. 14:11)

3. place of punishment for those who disobey God
  - a. not annihilated at death, but will be raised from the dead to judgment (John 5:28-29 and Matt. 25:31-46)
  - b. placed in hell for eternal punishment

### III. Denominational False Doctrines

#### A. Plan of Salvation

1. they are skilled in prepared presentation and do not like to get off track; unskilled at subject of salvation
2. ask and insist upon discussing is “What must I do to be saved?”
  - a. Jehovah’s Witnesses deny water baptism has anything to do with salvation; teach like most denominations that baptism merely shows one’s allegiance to Christ and does nothing more
  - b. “What then does Christian baptism signify? It is not a washing away of one’s sins, because cleansing from sin come only through faith in Jesus Christ (Eph. 1:7). Rather, it is a public demonstration, testifying that one has made a solemn dedication to Jehovah God and is presenting himself to do His will” (*The Truth...*, pages 183-4).
3. Bible teaches otherwise (Mark 16:15-16, Acts 2:38 and 22:16 and 1 Peter 3:21)

#### B. Organization of the Church

1. organized church of the Bible has elders and deacons
  - a. each church is fully autonomous
  - b. no ecclesiastical governing body, legislating or overseeing brotherhood works
2. Jehovah’s Witnesses is under the Watch Tower Bible Tract Society
  - a. local groups are called “Kingdom Halls”
  - b. Watch Tower exercises power over churches by dictating policy and work where is this organ in the body?
    - c. this is an amendment to God’s word and is condemned (Rev. 22:18-19, 2 John 9-11 and Gal. 1:6-9)
3. WTBS has regional servants, zone servants and district superintendents: what are scriptural qualifications?

#### C. Establishment of the Kingdom of God

1. not established on earth until 1914
  - a. Jesus disputes that: Mark 9:1 and 1:14-15
  - b. those in church were citizens in kingdom (Col. 1:13-14 and Eph. 2:19)
2. kingdom was established on first Pentecost after resurrection and came with power with the Holy Spirit (Mark 9:1, Acts 1:8, 2:1-4 and 2:47)

#### D. Lord’s Supper Is Improperly Observed

1. Bible church observed supper of first day of the week and every member was to participate (Acts 20:7 and 1 Cor. 11)
2. Jehovah’s Witnesses divide themselves into two groups—the 144,000 and the Great Crowd
  - a. 144,000 expect to be with God in heaven while Great Crowd expects to enjoy paradise on earth
  - b. supper is only taken by 144,000 on a yearly basis
  - c. when one takes the supper, he attests that he feels he will be part of the select group and shows a lack of humility; few if any ever partake of the supper in a hall

### IV. Eschatological Prophecies

#### A. Early Doctrine

1. Christ will come and lead a righteous army to annihilate the army of Satan
2. righteous dead will rise to reign with Christ for a thousand years but wicked will never be raised from dead (no hell)
3. Rutherford declared, “Millions now living will never die.”; he was not one of them, he died in 1922

## **B. Latter Prophecies**

1. Rutherford predicted 1925 as the resurrection of the faithful dead
2. built Beth Sarim, a house for Old Testament worthies who were supposed to be resurrected soon
3. *Children* was written to dissuade Jehovah's Witnesses from marrying until after the impending Armageddon
4. Jehovah's Witnesses predicted Armageddon again for 1975
5. here we are, still waiting for just one of their prophecies to come true

## **Conclusion**

Jehovah's Witnesses is a false organization and we should study with them but not accept them.

# First Called Christians

by J.S. Smith • delivered 16 October 1994 • Austin, Texas

## Introduction

- i. There is great confusion in the world over the name followers of Jesus are to wear. Some want to call themselves Methodists, Baptists, Catholics or Adventists or any number of other sectarian names. The Bible refers to the disciples of Jesus Christ by only one proper name, Christian.
- ii. But even among Christians, there is ignorance over what wearing that name entails. It is used only three times in the Bible but there is a wealth of information regarding who Christians are. The first time is in Acts 11:19-30

## Discussion

### I. Christians Are Disciples of the Teacher

#### A. That Is Jesus: Matt. 23:1-8 and Mark 10:17-31

1. some people who are rich are rich because money is their top priority
2. others who have less money may make family top priority
3. still others may make something else top priority
4. Jesus teaches that the kingdom and salvation should be top: Mark 8:34-38

#### B. The Assembly

1. Acts 8:26 tells us that Barnabas and Saul assembled for a year with the *ἐκκλησία* (*ekklesia*, the “called-out; the assembly”)
2. it was in this setting that Jesus’s disciples were called Christians for the very first time
  - a. disciple: *μαθητάς* (*mathetas*, “pupils; one who follows one’s teaching”)
    1. a Christian, then, is more than someone who has been baptized
    2. you can be baptized and yet not be one who follows Jesus’s teaching
    3. in order to truly be a disciple of Jesus’s—a Christian—you must abide in his words
  - b. Christians: *Χριστιανούς* (*Christianous*, “followers of Christ”)
    1. originally a term of derision given to his followers by the Gentiles but the name was soon adopted favorably by Christians
    2. the mark of a Christian is more than simply having been baptized as well
    3. a Christian is a follower of Christ
      - a. while you might have followed Christ into the water of baptism, He didn’t cease to walk there and neither can you
      - b. Jesus stepped out of the water and walked in service to God and so must you to be his follower
        1. Hymenaeus and Philetus had been baptized but they were not following Christ after getting out of the water: 2 Tim. 2:17-19
        2. the sinful man in Corinth and his condoning brethren had been baptized but they had stopped following Jesus once the water evaporated from their bodies
        3. if you call yourself a Christian, this is who you are, a disciple of Jesus’s teaching
          - a. one who meditates daily upon the Teacher’s sacred writings, applying them to your life and living as the Master instructed
          - b. disciples of Greek philosophers sat at the feet of their teachers and strived to live as they said
          - c. disciples of modern day spiritualists do the same thing
          - d. this should be a mark of our discipleship and if it isn’t, we must wonder if we truly are disciples at all

### II. Attributes Visible In This Passage

#### A. Teaching a Great Many People (verses 21, 24 and 26)

1. the mark of Christians in the first century was that they valued their knowledge of Jesus so much, they zealously desired to share it with others who were strangers from the Cross
2. Jesus’s disciples were interested in what he was—proclaiming God’s good news—there is a Savior in the world!
3. is this a mark of your discipleship?
  - a. when was the last time you invited someone to services?

b. do you mention him to others?

**B. Acted Upon a Deep Love of the Brethren**

1. interest in encouraging each other to continue with the Lord: Acts 11:23

a. put your heart fully into it

b. disciples have more than weekly commitment to Teacher—it is daily: Heb. 3:12-15

1. sin can tear us away from God if we are deceived to walk in sin

2. we are partakers with Christ only if we remain steadfast to the end: Acts 14:21-22

a. we must endure tribulation

b. the devil will aim at our hearts but if we wear the armor of God, we can deflect his weaponry: Heb. 10:24-25

1. must be present when the saints assemble to exhort one another

2. custom of some in the first century was to miss the assembly in order to do other things

3. they still wanted the benefits of being part of the ekklesia, the saved (Acts 2:47), but they didn't want to be concerned with the responsibilities of being in God's household

4. they were not only failing to encourage their brethren, but their absence was a discouragement to the others and a poor example to outsiders and their children

3. as before, this was work for today for the day of judgment is approaching

2. when there was need, there was help: Acts 11:27-30

a. each of the disciples purposed to aid their suffering brothers and sisters

b. they sent relief to them: 1 Cor. 12:26

1. the burdens of this life are taken on by others in the body

2. in times of illness, sorrow, family problems, financial trouble

3. the pain of these trials can be absorbed by those brethren: Gal. 6:1-2 and Matt. 6:25-34

a. often times, this care comes from the brethren who act in God's will

b. share your burdens, don't worry yourself sick

**Conclusion**

# Should Christians Keep The Sabbath?

by J.S. Smith • delivered 16 October 1994 • Austin, Texas

## Introduction

- i. We have all heard reference made to Christians keeping the Sabbath among the Seventh Day Adventists and we have heard different denominations talk about observing the Christian Sabbath. Different cult groups also like to apply this and other Old Testament laws to their followers as they try to exercise complete control over their actions.
- ii. The other extreme is also dangerous. Many people want to ignore the old testament and avoid studying it altogether. Those who do this refuse a large part of the word of God and the wisdom that comes from reading it.
- iii. Paul was speaking of the Old Testament when he wrote Timothy, "...from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus" (2 Tim. 3:15). The New Testament was not written when he was a child.
- iv. Ignorance of the Old Testament scriptures cripples us when we study Revelation because the imagery is largely borrowed from the Old Testament prophets. There are some 300 references to the OT in the book and none are identified in the context.
- v. The question then is important, should Christians obey the Sabbath and the other nine commandments and the rest of the Law?

## Discussion

### I. History of the Old Law

#### A. The Meaning of "The Old Law"

1. law of Moses and Old Testament are not synonymous terms
  - a. law is only small part of Hebrew scriptures
  - b. most of Old Testament canon is prophecy, wisdom literature and history
  - c. other types of Old Testament literature showed men and women living under old law and relating to it
2. was the law itself invalidated by the cross of Jesus?
  - a. was it all annulled or were only portions like the civil and ceremonial laws annulled?
  - b. were the ten commandments invalidated or should Christians observe them today?

#### B. A Law for Israel

1. given to Israel, not to Gentiles or the church: Deut. 4:4-8 and Psalm 147:19-20
2. the Jews recognized this clearly and expressed it in the Talmud (The collection of ancient Rabbinical writings consisting of the Mishnah and the Gemara, constituting the basis of religious authority in Orthodox Judaism)
  - a. Jewish rabbis thought Gentiles were subject to the law given to Noah after flood in Genesis 9
  - b. there were seven laws for Gentile nations drawn from that passage: authorization of human government, capital punishment for murder and prohibitions against blasphemy, idolatry, sexual impurity, theft, eating of blood, and devouring an animal's limb without killing it
  - c. the rainbow was the sign of part of this covenant, that God would never destroy earth with water again
3. when the church was established, the issue of applying the Mosaic law to Gentiles arose again, now to those who accepted Christ
  - a. the question of keeping the Sabbath was secondary to the matter of circumcision to enter the family of God and then keeping the old law to be righteous
  - b. some preachers met with the apostles and the Jerusalem church in Acts 15 to determine the truth once and for all
    1. the result was that no new laws were made for Christians, only old ones were reinforced
    2. the Gentiles were not to be troubled with the old law at all (Acts 15:19)
    3. James only instructed on four basic rules: abstinence from fornication, the eating of blood and things sacrificed to idols or strangulated (Acts 15:20, 29)

## B. A Temporary Law

1. God never intended it to be a permanent arrangement
  - a. the nation covenant with Abraham, the Messianic covenant with David and the land promise to Israel were declared to be everlasting (Gen. 17:7, 2 Sam. 23:5 and Psalm 105:8-11)
  - b. Mosaic law is never classified in Scripture as eternal: Jer. 31:31-32
2. the new covenant will be “an everlasting one” (Jer. 32:40 and Heb. 13:20)
  - a. the new one was mediated by the blood of Jesus
  - b. it invalidated the Mosaic law: Heb. 8:7-13 and Eph. 2:14-16

## C. Total Annulment

1. Bible never speaks of portions of Mosaic Law being carried over into the New (Heb. 8:13)
2. this includes even the Ten Commandments: 2 Cor. 3:5-9
  - a. “letters engraved on stones” is an obvious direct reference to the 10 commandments, the only commands from the old covenant that were written on stone by the hand of God
  - b. the other 603 or so commands were inscribed by Moses at God’s instruction
3. does this mean the 10 commandments are not applicable to Christians?
  - a. as part of the law of Moses, the 10 no longer are in force, but any of them that are reinforced in the law of Christ do apply
  - b. nine of the ten are included in the new covenant; they have even been expanded to cover how we think (Matt. 5); only the Sabbath observance from the 10 is not included
  - c. illustration: received driver’s license in West Virginia (subject to its laws)
    1. three years later, moved to Ala—ceased to be subject to WV laws—rendered inoperative for me (subject to new laws of Alabama); many laws were different (seat belts for example)
    2. but there were also many similar laws (red lights for instance); when I stopped at a red light in Alabama, I was not obeying laws of West Virginia, but Alabama; if I wore seat belts in Alabama, it was obedience to Alabama law
    3. many things were similar, but still there were two distinct systems
  - d. explanation: Mosaic law and law of Christ have many similarities but many differences and when we obey a command common to the two, we are obeying Christ, not Moses

## II. Freedom in Christ

### A. Keeping the Mosaic Law Now

1. should Christians keep the Sabbath?; Does the law of Moses apply to Christians?; No
2. but a Christian had the freedom to observe Jewish feast days and dietary laws under Romans 14 if he does so conscientiously
  - a. in the first century, the church was largely composed of Jews, many of whom balked at giving up these regulations from the old law
  - b. Paul permitted it under the Holy Spirit’s guide
    1. he cautioned them not to view such observance as contributing to his justification or sanctification
    2. and not to demand or expect others to keep the Law
    3. the observer must respect the non-observer
  3. the sabbath was not a feast day, it was a day of worship and the first day of the week holds that distinction in the church age (Acts 20:7)

### B. Fulfilling the Law: Matt. 5:17

1. how is this reconciled with the abolition of the Mosaic law
2. law did not end with *coming* of Jesus, nor with the commencement of his ministry, but with his death
3. while Jesus lived, he lived as a Jew under the Mosaic law
  - a. he was under obligation to follow it and he did so perfectly
  - b. when he died, he became testator of a new covenant that replaced the old

## Conclusion

# Trust In The Lord (A Sermon in Scripture And Song)

written by J.S. Smith • delivered 30 October 1994 • Austin, Texas

This evening's song leader is \_\_\_\_\_ .

## *Opening*

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-----  
Announcements  
Opening Prayer

## *Meditate Upon Prayer to God*

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Reading Psalm 109:21-27  
Song #72 Be With Me Lord  
Song #92 Others  
Song #63 I Need Thee Every Hour

## *Meditate Upon God's Care*

-----  
Reading Psalm 23  
Song #361 In His Time  
Song #378 The Solid Rock  
Song #390 Anywhere With Jesus

-----  
Middle Prayer

## *Meditate Upon Trust in God*

-----  
Reading Luke 7:3-9  
Song #167 We Saw Thee Not  
Song #535 Faith Is The Victory  
Song #182 I Believe in Mount Calvary

## *Meditate Upon The Lord's Invitation*

-----  
Invitation: Trust in the Lord  
Song #287 There's A Fountain Free

## *Communion and Closing*

-----  
-----  
Serving of the Lord's Supper  
Closing Prayer

-----  
Songs selected from *Hymns For Worship* by Shepard and Stevens

## **Introduction During Announcements**

- i. [Read 2 Timothy 1:3-12.]
  - ii. This is the essence of Paul's trust in God despite all the difficulties that he faced in his life. In other epistles, he listed many of the things that happened to him in his service as a Christian. Like Job, he persevered no matter what.
  - iii. In this sermon in scripture and song, we will study about trust in God's care through prayer and belief.
- 

## **The Lord's Invitation**

**Text:** Hebrews 2:1-13.

Our salvation was wrought at a most high price, the blood of the son of God. The writer of this book talks about judgment upon those who drifted away from God before the time of Christ and reasons that drifting from Christ now will allow no possibility of escape at all. God has been mindful of us and we must be mindful of Him now. We must put our trust in Him by putting our souls and eternities in His strong hands.

It is time to obey the gospel for some here tonight. For others, it may be time to admit a life that is not completely committed to righteousness. If the invitation applies to you as a Christian or not, obey Jesus and come.

# Murderers In The Church

by J.S. Smith • delivered 30 October 1994 • Austin, Texas

## Introduction

i. Would you believe there are murderers in the church: in most every congregation in the world, I would guess? They are not the type who carry knives and guns: those weapons are not deadly enough for the murderers in the church. They slay their victims with weapons far more vicious. The murderers in the church use hate-filled words; they use talk that should not be repeated; they use grudges. These weapons are more dangerous because their victims don't usually physically perish when the wounds are inflicted: they are forced to bear the anguish for days and sometimes years while other boils are inflicted by those they call 'brother.' If you shoot me in the heart, I die immediately and suffer no more. If you stab me in the back, I die slowly and continually and suffer daily.

## Discussion

### I. Who Are The Murderers?

#### A. They Are Tale-Bearers

1. they are idle except that they wander from house to house, tattling and "speaking things which they ought not" (1 Tim. 5)
2. sparks for an uncontrollable fire that destroys all in its path (Prov. 26:20)
3. he reveals secrets and compromises confidences (Prov. 11:13)

#### B. They Are Gossips

1. deeply concerned in other's affairs when they should be concerned with their own (1 Peter 4:15)
2. they live against the order of the New Testament and do not work; simply talk about others

#### C. They Are Slanderers

1. they make false charges and misrepresent or exaggerate events to damage the reputation of another (*Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary*)
2. they are stumbling blocks to those who are trying to live right (*Webster's*)
3. their hearts are filled with evil intents: Luke 6:45

#### D. They Are Back-Biters

1. one who speaks evil (Rom. 1:30)
2. a back biter has descended morally and intellectually to the passions and devices of a jungle animal who lacks the sense or godly compass to do anything else
3. he bites and devours his brethren with evil words, trying to consume them

#### E. They Are Divisive

1. causing strife and discord among brethren: Prov. 26:20-21 and 6:19
2. they divide brethren and friends: Prov. 16:28 and 17:9

### II. Why Do They Murder?

#### A. Idleness

1. their hands and minds are unoccupied by anything productive
2. they develop the hobby of listening and repeating
  - a. sometimes they report accurately but the news should be kept secret
  - b. sometimes they embellish to have a better story to tell
3. of such were the young widows in Paul's day and lazy in Thessalonica (1 Tim. 5:13 and 1 Thess. 4)

#### B. Hypocrisy

1. some esteem themselves highly as righteous stalwarts and blindly try to elevate themselves above others by stomping on their brothers and sisters
2. some consider themselves universal, spiritual physicians whose office is always open
  - a. they disseminate opinions and advice on all matters, great or small
  - b. their own souls ache for attention; time won't allow: Matt. 7:5, Rom. 2:1-3 and Prov. 11:19a

### C. Foolishness

1. this is always the case with a verbal murderer
2. "Whoever spreads slander is a fool" (Prov. 10:18).
3. they add themselves to a group reserved for punishment and hell fire: 1 Peter 9-10
4. he fails to use his mind as a filter: Prov. 29:11
  - a. James 1 says to be quick to hear but slow to speak
  - b. many words and thoughts that come to us should be allowed to fade away from the mind

### D. Fraternal Hatred or Unconcern

1. that man or women you are talking about is your brother or your sister: Psalm 50:20
2. do you have brotherly love for that person while you stab his back?: 1 John 3:10-15
  - a. Cain didn't have love for his brother, he envied him and killed him
  - b. is it envy that causes you to stick the knife in your brother's back?
  - c. such a one is not of God and has not eternal life!: 1 John 3:16-18
    1. wouldn't you all be better served to live this way?
    2. do you claim to love your sister while sharpening your blade?

### E. Unreasoned Anger or Grudge Holding: Matt. 5:21-22

1. words spoken out of anger are often the most damaging
  - a. "Raca" and "You fool" are examples of name-calling and threats
  - b. when we utter such expletives, we are endangering only our own souls
2. anger is a normal emotion, so what do we do with it?: Eph. 4:25-27
  - a. don't hold grudges: Matt. 5:23-26
  - b. anger is a stew that boils quickly and then slowly, but left on the heat is always boiling somehow (feuds)

## III. How Can Murder Be Resisted?

### A. Keep Yourself From It

1. "Keep your tongue from evil, and your lips from speaking guile. Depart from evil, and do good; Seek peace, and pursue it" (Psalm 34:13-14).
  - a. keep your tongue clean from the gossip by vacating the area where it is being repeated
  - b. seek peace instead of this discord: Eph. 4:31-32
  - c. eradicate gossip and the tendency as if it were rat poison in your belly
2. train yourself to follow the right way: be kind and tenderhearted: Titus 3:1-2
  - a. be taught on the subject
  - b. speak evil of no one; "if you can't say something nice, don't say anything at all"

### B. Stop The Web of Words

1. refuse the gossip when he telephones, knocks or takes you aside in the parking lot
  - a. King Saul was listening to a bunch of slanderers who told him that David wanted to take his throne and kill him: it wasn't true but he listened long enough to become convinced it was
  - b. David said, "Why do you listen to the words of men who say, 'Indeed David seeks your harm'?"
  - c. tell him or her you are not interested: "I do not want to hear this."
  - d. when the victimized person hears that John has been talking to Judy about him, both the teller and the hearer will bear the indignation of the victim
2. keep your mouth shut: Prov. 29:11, 20 and 1 Thess. 4:11-12
3. victims must endure meekly: Psalm 109:1-5 and 1 Peter 2:12, 3:16
4. never repay evil for the evil you have suffered: Rom. 12:17-21

## Conclusion

This is a real problem and we need to start taking it more seriously. Some will not see heaven because they can't stop their gums from flapping. This church will not long survive if we devour each other.

# Shall We Drink?

by J.S. Smith • delivered 6 November 1994 • Austin, Texas

## Introduction

i. One example of the ways worldly attitudes are infiltrating the household of God is in drinking. While most everyone quickly agrees that drunkenness is sinful, there has arisen some question over the iniquity in social drinking or drinking in moderation. We will examine this question today in light of the scriptures of God.

## Discussion

### I. The Wine of the New Testament

#### A. The Process of Making Wine

1. juice was squeezed from grapes by treading upon them or its own pressure
2. then, sometimes, preserved in an unfermented state to be drunk as “must”
  - a. a non-alcoholic grape juice similar to Welch’s
  - b. Collected in jars or bottles and some was buried to prevent fermentation
3. other times, it was allowed to ferment and become an alcoholic beverage
  - a. fermentation is the process by which a group of chemical reactions, induced by living or nonliving things, such as a yeast, a bacterium, a mold, or an enzyme, split complex organic compounds into relatively simple substances, especially the anaerobic conversion of sugar to carbon dioxide and alcohol by yeast)
  - b. this is the alcoholic “wine”

#### B. Four Different Greek Words Rendered “Wine” in English Translations

1. οἶνος: “must or new wine” (Thayer, 3631 and Smith’s Bible Dictionary)
  - a. this word is used over two dozen times in the New Testament: John 2:2-3, 7-10; Rom. 14:21 (wine of idolatrous feasts, like the meat), 1 Timothy 3:8 and 5:23
  - b. this is non-alcoholic grape juice like Welch’s
2. γλυκος: “sweet juice pressed from the grape, sweet wine” (Thayer, 1098)
  - a. used in Acts 2:13: implication is obvious
  - b. “an intoxicant, undergoing fermentation some time (Vine’s Expository Dictionary)
3. παροικος: “one who sits long at wine; given to wine, drunken” (Thayer, 3941)
  - a. used twice in New Testament in qualifications of elders (1 Tim. 3:3 and Titus 1:7)
  - b. again, this is obviously a sinful practice

#### C. The Point

1. the word “wine” in the Bible referred to more than just an alcoholic beverage
2. wine refers to any beverage produced from the juice of a grape (or pomegranate)
  - a. it refers to simple breakfast grape juice in some cases and in others, it refers to an intoxicating drink
  - b. “The simple wines of antiquity were incomparably less deadly than the stupefying and ardent beverages of our western nations. The wines of antiquity were more like syrups; many of them were not intoxicant; many more intoxicant in a small degree; and all of them, as a rule, taken only when largely diluted with water. They contained, even undiluted, but 4 or 5 per cent of alcohol” (Smith’s Bible Dictionary).
  - c. this explains why drunkenness is often described in the scriptures as “sitting long at wine”
  - d. beers and wine and so forth that are peddled in our day are far more intoxicating than what the Bible was condemning!

### II. Three Words of 1 Peter 4:3

#### A. Introduction

1. first phrase shows this to be a clear condemnation of the subjects discussed
2. verse 4 repeats the attitude of abstinence necessary

## B. Banqueting (KJV), Drinking Parties (NKJV, NASV)

1. ποτος: “a drinking” (Thayer, 4224) or “an assembling together for the purpose of drinking” (Barnes)
  - a. this is an apostolic prohibition of attending gatherings where drinking is to be a main pursuit
  - b. social drinking is here strictly forbidden
2. when people gather to drink alcohol, Christians are not to be present
3. one drink at the bar or the office party or during the football game is sinful

## C. Revellings (KJV), Revelries (NKJV), Carousels (NASV)

1. κωμος: “a nocturnal and riotous procession of half-drunken and frolicsome fellows” (Thayer, 2970)
  - a. this is the drinking party to the next level
  - b. the drinking has reached the point that the drinkers are now “half-drunk”
2. they could get worse, but they are very evidently under the influence of a mind-altering drug
3. thick tongue, giddiness, loss of equilibrium, vision and judgment are already impaired

## D. Drunkenness

1. οἰνοφλυγία: “to bubble up, overflow, drunkenness, wine-bibbing” (Thayer, 3632)
2. used in 1 Peter 4:3 to refer to complete drunkenness, total intoxication
3. this is the third and final, extreme level of drinking; complete drunkenness; . what began with one drink has now progressed to total intoxication
4. 1 Peter 4:3 condemns drinking of alcoholic beverages in any measure, from social drinking to half-drunkenness to total intoxication, drinking is not allowed by the law of Christ

## III. Dangers in Drinking

### A. Impairs Judgment: Isa. 28:7

1. makes distinction between right and wrong unclear (Prov. 31:4-5)
  - a. many sins have been committed by people unable to distinguish right from wrong due to alcohol
  - b. inhibitions are broken down; forbidden things are desired: 1 Thess. 5:6-7
2. physical judgment disappears
  - a. drunken driving deaths continue to plague a nation that refuses to put 2 and 2 together
  - b. the body’s abilities (vision, depth perception, velocity, etc.) are impaired

### B. Inflames Passions

1. anger from “the wine of violence” (Prov. 4:17): Prov. 20:1
2. leads to licentiousness: Rom. 13:13
  - a. prostitution, adultery, fornication
  - b. “Woe to those who rise early in the morning, That they may follow intoxicating drink; Who continue until night till wine inflames them!” (Isa. 5:11)
  - c. how many pregnancies result from parties or dates where alcohol is used
  - d. how many rapes have to occur due to alcohol for us to comprehend it
3. “Harlotry, wine and new wine enslave the heart” (Hosea 4:11).

### C. Harmful to the Body

1. body is a gift of God to be cherished and nourished (Eph. 5:29 and 1 Cor. 6:19)
2. alcohol eats away at the liver and brain

## Conclusion

Shall we drink? No!

# Offer It To Your Governor, Brother!

by J.S. Smith • delivered 6 November 1994 • Austin, Texas

## Introduction

i. We will go back to the Old Testament this morning to the last book of the ancient Scriptures. God charged Malachi with bringing a series of charges against his people. Their worship was empty and ritualistic: the people's faith had been transformed into meaningless motions without thought. God was displeased with their worship and their offerings. The people were making offerings, but they lacked obedience from the heart to the commands of God.

## Discussion

### I. What Is Wrong With These People?

#### A. Irreverence, Insensitivity and Ingratitude

1. they were ungrateful for the favored position God gave to them: Mal. 1:2-5
2. they lacked the reverence rightfully due their Father and Master: Mal. 1:6
3. their worship was not what God commanded, demanded and is due: Mal. 1:7-8
4. they doubted God's justice: Mal. 2:17
5. they were impenitent: Mal. 3:7
6. their covetousness had made them withhold God's due: Mal. 3:10
7. they doubted God's goodness and his promises: Mal. 3:13-15

#### B. The First Is the Root of All the Others

1. God's people had forgotten His care for them and their ancestors
2. this has always been a great danger to God's people of any era
  - a. as they spied out the land God was giving them in Moses's day, their trust in God and his promises faltered: Deut. 1:26-27
  - b. they seem to have the ability to forget anything: Psalm 106:6-14
3. they expected to be spoiled and live lives of luxury because of God's love
  - a. they thought their lives would be untroubled no matter what they did
  - b. when they did not receive what they desired, they quickly forgot all that had been done
4. they did not understand or love God as he desires
  - a. it is sometimes called the greatest command in Deut. 6:5: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your might."
  - b. it is sad and ugly when someone questions God's love for them, but it happened and it still does

### II. The More Things Change, The More They Stay The Same

#### A. Many Doubt God's Goodness and His Promises

1. they drink in the countless blessings he sends down but when something unpleasant happens, immediately, God is to blame
2. "What have you done for me lately?"

#### B. Their Covetousness Causes Them to Withhold What is Due God

1. the monthly budget has contribution to the work of his church at the bottom instead of the top
2. first thing to decrease in hard times is the offering; it is never made up when a service is missed
3. the attitude should be, "How much of God's money am I going to keep" instead of "How much of my money am I going to bless God with?"

#### D. Some Doubt God's Justice

1. I'll continue in my sin: I don't think Jesus is coming back just yet and I feel pretty healthy
2. surely God won't allow me to go to hell just because I miss services a couple of times a month to watch football: I still love him; I just love the Cowboys, too

#### E. Their Worship is Not What God Commanded, Demanded, And Is Due

1. the Bible shows men worshiping each first day of the week, partaking of the Lord's Supper on each Sunday: he is due this

2. the writer chides those who skip the assembling of the saints: Heb. 10:19-39
  - a. they had been washed with pure water and were to hold fast confession without wavering
  - b. some were making blemished offerings by attending infrequently
  - c. those who established forsaking the assembling as a pattern were sinning willfully and the sacrifice for sins was made null for them; the punishment for trampling Jesus under foot will be terrible
  - d. despite overcoming other great trials, they willingly cast away their confidence in God and the great reward he has prepared
  - e. their souls draw back to the destruction that uncovered sins promises

#### F. They Lack the Reverence and Gratitude Due God

1. it is God who provides the way of escape from the punishment of sins in Christ Jesus
2. making blemished offerings to him is irreverent; they simply aren't thankful anymore

### III. Polluted Offerings

#### A. Attendance is Irregular

1. would your boss accept it if you showed up only when you felt like it: maybe only 10% of the time?
2. why do you think the God of heaven should accept less respect than you show to a man on earth?

#### B. Giving Is Held Back

1. you don't give as you have been prospered
2. when you travel or are sick, you keep the offering for yourself; would the IRS accept it?
3. why should the God of Heaven accept less than you afford an earthly agency

#### C. Bible Study is Uncommon

1. would your teachers accept it if you refused to study and just let you pass by
2. why should the God of Heaven let you pass when you show more interest in earthly subjects

#### D. The Lord's Supper is Skipped

1. would your husband not acknowledge that you are absent from the dinner table for six weeks
2. why do you expect the God of Heaven to not care

#### E. Influence Not Considered

1. will your non-Christian spouse be won by your behavior or made to feel comfortable in his sin
2. will your children learn the value of worship and godly living or the unimportance of serving?
3. do you think God does not care about them?
4. will others see your light or is there a black-out in your spirit; has your salt lost its savor?

### IV. What To Do?

#### A. Cultivate The Proper Attitude

1. be grateful for the favored position God gave to you: 1 John 3:1
2. exhibit the reverence rightfully due your Father and Master: Matthew 23:9
3. make your worship what God has commanded, demanded and is due
4. never doubt God's justice, He will repay
5. put away covetousness and give God His due, render unto Him what is due
6. remember God's goodness and his promises ( 2 Peter 1:4)

#### B. Be Penitent

1. if you have been offering blemished offerings to God, you need to repent
2. express sorrow for your mistakes and resolve never to offer lame worship to God again

## Conclusion

# To Be A Christian

by J.S. Smith • delivered 13 November 1994 • Austin, Texas

## Introduction

As has been noted before, the word ‘Christian’ is used only three times in the New Testament. I probably use the word more times every day and in every sermon than it is used in the Bible. The three occasions provide a great deal of insight into what it takes to become a Christian and to be a Christian. We will study the second instance of its use today in the twenty-sixth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles.

The context goes back to chapter 25: Paul was imprisoned by the Jews and eventually came to stand before Festus. The Jews who accused him could offer no proof that he had done anything worthy of punishment. Nonetheless, judicial corruption landed Paul before yet another judgment seat.

As Felix has passed on this vexing Jew to Festus, Festus was about to pass him on to Caesar, but he was faced with a political quandary. How could he reasonably send a man to appear before Caesar when there were no specified charges against him?

Festus saw hope when King Agrippa came to Caesarea to greet him. Festus enlisted the king’s help and intrigued him to hear the prisoner who claimed that this Jesus was dead but not alive.

The introduction of Agrippa is an interesting irony. Agrippa’s father, Herod had murdered the apostle James in Acts 12. His Uncle Herod had beheaded John the Baptist. His great grandfather was the Herod who had tried to kill Jesus as an infant. The name of Jesus was one that had been known for decades in Agrippa’s house. Agrippa was about 31 years old, according to Josephus, as he sits before Paul with his sister, Bernice.

Paul is permitted to begin his defense in chapter 26 (he gestures as a typical preacher would (verse 1). Paul claims joy at this opportunity: he will be able to defend his work and he will be able to do more work. Paul recognizes Agrippa as an “expert in all customs and questions which have to do with the Jews” (verse 3). There were some seeds of knowledge planted in Agrippa and Paul was challenged to nurture them to grow.

Paul recalls his former life as a Pharisee: an expert in the Hebrew Law and Prophets, where Jesus’s ascension to the throne was foretold. Paul is here being “judged for the hope of the promise made by God to our fathers” (verse 6). Paul is not secretive about his work in persecuting Christ’s disciples; he even admits compelling them to repudiate their Lord at the threat of death. All this is to show the dramatic swing of the pendulum that made Saul the persecutor Paul the persecuted.

In verse 12, the apostle recounts the day the pendulum swung so sharply. The words of Jesus converted him to a disciple. His new life is summed up in verses 19-20. It is apparent that Jewish expert King Agrippa listened quietly and attentively to Paul’s defense; Festus, on the other hand, cried boisterously, “Much learning is driving you mad” (verse 24). Calmly, Paul contradicts the accusation by speaking “the words of truth and reason” (verse 25).

He turns his attention to the knowledgeable prospect, Agrippa: verses 26-27. Agrippa knows the law and prophets: he knows that the Messiah was coming. This Jesus, whom Paul preaches, matches the prophecies. Agrippa appears to be convinced that they are one in the same (verse 28).

Paul extends his invitation to all present to become disciples of Jesus. The event concludes with no immediate takers: but who knows what happened later? Agrippa says that with a little more persuasion, you will make me a Christian. We fault him a bit too much for that statement and a skewed translation is partly to blame. He didn’t accept the Lord as the eunuch did but few of us did either. Most of us upon hearing the gospel for the first time need a little more persuasion.

## Discussion

### I. Preaching Is The Persuader

#### A. What Paul Could Have Done

1. he could have spoken in tongues or performed a miracle to amaze and enchant his audience
2. he could have done anything supernatural to convince them to listen
3. he did not

#### B. Miraculous Gifts of the Spirit Were Not What Was Needed Here

1. preaching was; the words of truth were needed (not hypnotizing miracles and not possession by

the Holy Spirit)

2. preaching was needed
  - a. the word of God is manifested through preaching (Titus 1:1-3)
  - b. the gospel of God is spoken boldly and against opposition (1 Thess. 2:3-4); Col. 1:23 and 28
3. same is true in our day
  - a. you don't preach with hamburgers and Christmas pageants
  - b. you preach with the word of God
4. the truth is more powerful than the lie
  - a. the lie of Satan to Eve and Adam was composed of words, preaching if you will: "You will not surely die" if you eat of this fruit
  - b. Satan did not employ mystical powers of possession; he twisted no arms; he did not physically enter their hearts to control them like mind-numbed robots
  - c. neither does God need to employ or desire to employ mystical powers of possession or send his Spirit physically into a man's unsuspecting heart to push his buttons to serve God
  - d. the lie is not more powerful than the truth, but if God must force his will while Satan needs only to suggest his, then Satan and his lie are more powerful than the dictatorial God of heaven: it's just not true; preaching saves: 1 Cor. 1:21

## II. Jesus's Instructions, Paul's Work, Agrippa's Reaction: Faith Alone?

### A. Jesus's Instructions

1. to the apostles, Matthew 28:19-20
2. to Paul, specifically, Acts 26:17-18

### B. Paul's Work

1. he taught on his own obedience: Acts 26:19
2. he lobbied for others' obedience: Acts 26:20
3. he invited others to be obedient: Acts 26:29

### C. Agrippa's Reaction

1. he heard the gospel and believed the prophecies about Jesus
2. as Paul concluded his sermon, he was nearly convinced to become a Christian
3. what would he have to do to be saved?
  - a. he would have to confess Jesus as Paul and the eunuch had done
  - b. he would have to repent of his sins as Paul preached
  - c. he would have to be baptized as Jesus commanded, as Paul and the eunuch and Cornelius were
  - d. he would have to do works befitting repentance; faith only?

## III. Paul's Example Is Important In Being Like Christ

### A. He Refused To Compromise His Beliefs

1. even at threat of death, he would not recant his confession
2. he would not even alter his words enough to escape

### B. He Preached the Gospel In Any Opportunity

1. he looked for opportunities
2. he preached anywhere and everywhere to anyone and everyone
3. he was interested in the souls of men and was not afraid of a challenge

### C. He Was Slow to Wrath

1. Festus could have destroyed Paul's credibility with Agrippa with his sarcastic accusation of insanity
2. Agrippa would have taken a vengeful maniac much less seriously

## Conclusion

# Choosing a Marriage Partner

by J.S. Smith • delivered 13 November 1994 • Austin, Texas

## Introduction

i. There has been a great deal of time spent in teaching on marriage, divorce and remarriage in recent years. It is right and good that we do this but we must also not ignore the value of preventative preaching in this area. We also need strong teaching on what to do before marriage. This will prevent future problems if handled successfully. Before marrying, there are many things you must consider; this lesson centers on three of them.

## Discussion

### I. Is My Potential Mate a Scriptural Possibility

#### A. What Is His/Her Marital Status According to the Scriptures?

1. question must be answered satisfactorily; is he/she single in God's eyes?
2. an eligible person is one who has never been married before--that's easy
3. an eligible person is one who has been widowed: Romans 7:1-3
4. an eligible person is one who is innocent party in a divorce for the ground of adultery: Matt. 5:31-32 and Matt. 19:3-9
  - a. these two passages show that the innocent party in a divorce for adultery is eligible to remarry
  - b. the guilty party does not enjoy that possibility; the one who marries a guilty party is subsequently also guilty of the crime of adultery, whether done ignorantly or willingly
  - c. if a person is divorced for any other reason, neither party is eligible to remarry, except each other

#### B. Is It Important To Be Certain?

1. yes, very: some have questions about their potential mate's eligibility and choose not to become certain, thinking that what they don't know can't hurt them
2. wrong, sins committed in ignorance are deadly also
  - a. Paul thanked God in writing to Timothy that the sins he committed in persecuting Christians prior to his conversion were forgiven: "I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly, in unbelief" (1 Tim. 1:13)
  - b. he still needed God's mercy and that mercy is extended to the penitent

#### C. What If I Find Out Later That My Mate Was Not Eligible?

1. you have ignorantly entered into an adulterous bond and you need to repent
2. sins committed in ignorance must be repented of--they are still sins!
  - a. Jesus begged his Father's forgiveness for his crucifiers who "knew not what they [did]"
  - b. Peter preached repentance to that same group and they repented of the sins they committed in ignorance
3. the best example for this situation is in the book of Ezra
  - a. the people of Israel had taken wives from among the heathens which was forbidden
  - b. Ezra showed them the truth and they repented
  - c. they did so with words and with actions
    1. although penitent, they had no right to those women and so they put them away
    2. repentance requires restitution and so they did
  - d. if you are caught with a spouse that you have no right to, repentance requires that you end the adulterous relationship
    1. that is a difficult thing to do
    2. the best thing to do is to be certain before marrying

### II. How Will This Affect My Spiritual Life?

#### A. Will My Spouse Help Me To Grow in Christ?

1. Genesis 2:18 sets up the marital relationship: the wife must be a helper
2. Ephesians 5:25-29, 33 shows it to be a mutual vow of assistance and love
3. the relationship is to be characterized by nourishment and cherishing

- a. has the courtship been characterized by these attitudes?
- b. is there any indication that these attitudes will not be present in the marriage?
- 4. if there is abuse or neglect or spiritual disinterest in the courtship, marriage is not going to solve the problem

#### B. Will My Spouse Hold Me Back in Service To Christ?

- 1. a Christian is bound to grow and mature in service to the Lord
- 2. this responsibility supersedes marital ones
  - a. has courtship been marked by persuasion to skip services or engage in immorality?
  - b. marriage is only going to offer more opportunities for such suasion
- 3. you may have a happy marriage, but if you miss heaven, you have missed everything
  - a. a person must submit to Christ first--if a husbands tries to supersede Christ's authority over a woman Christian, the husband's words must be rejected
  - b. a spouse like this is a hindrance to serving God
  - c. you are best not to get yourself in this situation in the first place
- 4. if the potential mate is not a Christian, can you teach them with some hope of success?: 1 Cor. 15:33 and 1 Peter 3:1-2

### III. Am I Ready...

#### A. ...To Settle Down?

- 1. Genesis 2:18
- 2. leaving and cleaving

#### B. ...To Enter a Permanent Relationship?

- 1. Matthew 19
- 2. marriage is for keeps; no returns/no refunds

#### C. ...To Give Myself?

- 1. Gen. 2:23-24
- 2. all that I have is yours

#### D. ...To Tighten the Belt Financially?

- 1. parents will not foot the bill
- 2. it costs money to live, believe it or not

#### E. ...To Fulfill The God-Prescribed Roles in Marriage?

- 1. Eph. 5:22-27, 1 Peter 3:7 and Titus 2:3
- 2. can I fit this mold at this point in my life

#### F. Am I Sure?

- 1. Prov. 18:22
- 2. Heb. 13:4
- 3. no turning back when the vows are made before God

### **Conclusion**

Think carefully before you marry. Examine the situation with open eyes.

# We Seek a Homeland

by J.S. Smith • delivered 20 November 1994 • Austin, Texas

## Introduction

- i. World history is full of tribes and groups searching for a place in which they may call home, where they may pen their livestock, build their houses, till the ground and raise their children. Even today, the Palestinians seek their own homeland in the middle east.
- ii. God's people have always searched for a similar homeland and yet their homeland was a spiritual one based on the infallible promises of God. At times, this homeland included a physical expanse of soil, but at the very root, the homeland of God's people is always much closer to the Father than that.
- iii. As Christians, we seek a homeland and look forward to the day in which we can follow our fathers in the faith and settle down for eternity with the Father.
- iv. [Read Hebrews 11:13-16.]

## Discussion

### I. Abel and Enoch Died In Faith: Hebrews 11:4-6

#### A. Abel Obeyed God: Genesis 4:1-5

1. the offering that Abel offered was what God expected and demanded: it was pleasing to him while Cain's offering was not what God demanded
2. there is a clear distinction between the faith of these two brothers
  - a. Abel's faith was vital and obedient
  - b. Cain's faith was certain enough about God's existence but his heart was not in it: he had faith but it was a sickly, emaciated faith

#### B. Cain Disobeyed God: Genesis 4:6-8

1. his offering was insufficient and God told him so and what to do about it; he could make his error right by repenting and doing better; God warned him that if he refused, sin was waiting at his door
2. Cain refused and acted without faith in killing his brother; Abel was not his rival; both could find God's favor equally; by submitting to God, he could rule his temptations with armor of God

#### C. Enoch Was Like Abel

1. little is told of him and little is known; Hebrews 11:5 sums it up best
2. Genesis 5:24 offers that "he walked with God" and Jude 14-15 is indicative of his character

#### D. These Fathers of Antiquity Yet Speak

1. though dead thousands of years, the obedience of Abel and his righteousness speak loudly
2. Enoch is remembered throughout the ages as a man who "pleased God"
3. this accounting of Enoch caused the Hebrew writer to pen verse 6

### II. Noah: Hebrews 11:7

#### A. He Was Divinely Warned of Things Not Seen: Genesis 6:5-8, 11-13

1. the clouds that would soon destroy the earth were not even in the sky yet
2. the wicked neighbors could look to the sky and laugh at Noah
3. Noah believed because faith is "the evidence of things not seen" (Heb. 11:1)
  - a. Noah didn't have to see to believe
  - b. he heard God and he believed

#### B. He Was Moved With Godly Fear

1. he didn't question God as to the wisdom of this destruction or ark materials
2. he knew God could and would do as he said and Noah had better get in line or join his neighbors

#### C. A Day of Salvation and Condemnation

1. obedience led to his salvation and obedience and salvation of his household
2. Noah was also a "just man...[who] walked with God" (Gen. 6:9) and a preacher of righteousness
3. there was a very clear line drawn in Noah's day

- a. on one side were the righteous who feared and obeyed God
- b. on the other side were the wicked who did not
- c. separating them were two things: faith and the frame of that ark, the vessel of salvation
- 4. Noah condemned the others, not with words of cursing or judicial powers
  - a. Noah condemned the world by being obedient himself and offering them the words of truth and repentance which they refused
  - b. just as queen of south would condemn those who refused Jesus (Luke 11)
    - 1. by virtue of the fact that she diligently sought God while these cared nothing for Jesus at all
    - 2. she would not literally hold judicial powers then, but her actions would condemn those who refused God
  - c. in like manner today, Christians condemn the world
    - 1. not by cursing or judging
    - 2. by obedience and offering words of truth and repentance to impenitent: John 12:48
    - 3. Christians condemn world as we obey and it refuses: 1 Peter 3:20-21
- 5. Noah is an heir of righteousness according to faith

### III. Abraham and Sarah

- A. The Land They Left: Hebrews 11:8
  - 1. his native land where his family had lived for centuries; the only place he knew
  - 2. there were no mysteries or unknown fears here
  - 3. it was reasonably an easy place to live but it wasn't God's land
  - 4. he left the known for the unknown, never an easy choice to make
- B. The Land They Sought
  - 1. this land was an unknown quantity (sustenance and safety)
  - 2. he dwelt in temporary abodes and traveled constantly
  - 3. but it was worth it in Abraham and Sarah's eyes
    - a. his former home had no godly foundation, the one he sought did
    - b. this land was of promise, great promises
- C. God Is Faithful
  - 1. despite the astronomical odds, man would put against the realization of these promises, Abraham and Sarah judged God able to accomplish it
  - 2. their faith was in God and they moved by faith

### IV. Declare It Plainly

- A. We Are All Strangers and Pilgrims Here
  - 1. this world is not our home: 1 Peter 2:7-11
  - 2. in a world filled with vice and the will of the heathens, we stand out like Bill and Wilma speaking English in Monterey, Mexico
  - 3. our citizenship is in heaven (Phil. 3:20)
- B. The Homeland We Seek: Hebrews 13:14
  - 1. eternity with God; Abel could have appeased Cain by offering fruit
  - 2. Enoch could have found peace in the world by not stepping on everyone's toes with his preaching
  - 3. Noah could have told God to find somebody else, that he was content to dwell among men
  - 4. Abraham and Sarah could have stopped their travels and went back to their native home where the promises of God would be made null
  - 5. Christian can walk back into world; bathe himself with mire of wickedness
  - 6. the road to heaven is filled with obstacles and trials while the road back to the devil can be traveled in a second's time: Phil. 3:12-16 and 2 Timothy 1:8-12

### Conclusion

# Clothed To Appear In The Book of Life

by J.S. Smith • delivered 20 November 1994 • Austin, Texas

## Introduction

- i. [Read Revelation 20:11-15.]
- ii. Here are the principles by which Jesus's final judgment on each and every man will be conducted. The Book of Life will be opened and all will be judged according to his works. If one's name is not written in that Book, eternal damnation will be the verdict, but if one's name is recorded there, eternal reward awaits. We need to know about that book before we behold it in the Day of the Lord and we need to make certain that our names are written there.

## Discussion

### I. The Book of Life

#### A. Its Author Is God

1. it is His book as Moses acknowledges (Exod. 32:32)
2. He has been writing this epic since he laid the foundations of the world and created Adam (Rev. 13:8 and 17:8)
3. will be published in the day of judgment (Rev. 20:12) in heaven (Luke 10:20)

#### B. Table of Contents

1. a record of individual names (Exod. 32:32-33)
  - a. God has individuals in mind when it comes to this book and to judgment
  - b. this emphasized the importance of individual responsibility
2. a register or official list of names
  - a. a citizen register: the citizens of God's kingdom (Phil. 3:20)
  - b. a family register: the members of God's household (Eph. 3:14)
  - c. an employee register: those who serve the Lord (Eph. 4:1)
  - d. a reservation ledger: those for whom heaven is reserved (1 Peter 1:4)
  - e. a military manifest: the soldiers of the Lord (2 Tim. 2:3)
  - f. a race card: those running for the prize of God's high calling (Heb. 12:1)

#### C. Theme: Eternal Destiny

1. the book will be completed and opened at the Day of judgment (Rev. 20:12)
2. those whose names appear will enter heaven: Matt. 25:31-34, Rev. 3:5 and 19:9
3. those whose names are missing will be cast away to destruction: Rev. 21:27 and 20:15

### II. Many Are Called, But Few Are Chosen

#### A. Background of The Parable of the Wedding Feast: Matthew 22:1-14

##### 1. King and Son

- a. Jesus is here presented as royalty to a group looking for a king
- b. his wedding was about to take place
  1. Jesus, the groom, was about to take his bride, the church
  2. the wedding feast was a common custom of those days and most would be thrilled to be invited

to feast at the palace

##### 2. original guest list

- a. the king's servants went out to invite the most logical guests: those whom he had known
- b. but the servants were unable to convince them to come to the feast
- c. he sent them a second time to announce that all was ready, all that was good and anticipated was now available
  1. they made light of the invitation and went about their regular work
  2. other guest list seized the servants of the king and savaged them
- d. the king turned his attention to some who instead might prove worthy of the invitation
  1. he sent his messengers into the common areas of the country
  2. they found all types of people, some with good moral habits and some who were at first rough and crude and unlikely recipients

3. the wedding hall was filled with those who accepted the invitation and rejoiced in the presence of the king

3. one man there was not clothed for the wedding, though
  - a. the king asked him why he was not properly attired
  - b. he was speechless: he had no defense whatsoever
  - c. his end was no better than those who had initially rejected the invitation
  - d. he was called, but he wasn't chosen

#### B. Response of Original Guest List

1. the gospel went first to the Jews including the Pharisees and chief priests
  - a. they had sought the Messiah so long and yet his appearance disappointed them and they ignored his invitation and that of his servants
  - b. they severely treated his apostles and went about their business: Matthew 21:42-46
2. they met the gospel face to face and said no thanks
3. but it is more than just Jews who reacted this way
4. millions today know of Jesus and yet say no thanks; their end is fire

#### C. Characteristics of Grateful Guest List

1. they were not ones who had always been close and known of by the King
2. they were strangers from his nation
3. but they accepted the invitation of Jesus gratefully
4. they clothed themselves for the feast: Gal. 3:26-27
  - a. "clothed with humility" to receive God's grace (1 Peter 5:5)
  - b. clothed with white robes cleansed with Lamb's blood (Rev. 7:9 and 22:14)
  - c. "the armor of light" (Rom. 13:12) and "the Lord, Jesus Christ" (Rom. 13:14): Col. 3:12-17

#### D. The Unclothed Guest list

1. one was among these clothed guests who was not wearing what they were
2. he appeared to the other to be adequate, I suppose, but the King was able to discern something was missing
3. He is one who has become a Christian in the worldly sense but his faith was not heartfelt
  - a. his baptism might have been for business gain or to become choir president or to please another
  - b. he may have started with good intentions but backslid later
  - c. he may have been clothed before, but now he stood there naked
4. no better off than those that rejected Christ from beginning: 2 Peter 2:20-21 and Hebrews 6:4-6

### III. Overthrown in The Wilderness

#### A. These Were Called: 1 Corinthians 10:1-4

1. all called, all traveled, all baptized into Moses
2. all ate the same spiritual food and drank from the promise of the Christ then to come
3. all we as Christians were called by Jesus's invitation to come

#### B. But God Was Not Well-Pleased: 1 Corinthians 10:5-11

1. God called them, they followed, but they backslid
2. they fell into lust, idolatry, fornication, temptation and murmuring
3. this is for our learning: don't follow them or you will face the same fate

#### C. The Example: Heb. 3:16-19

1. they all lived and yet some died
2. they were all called, and yet some were not chosen because of their disobedience

### Conclusion

Where are you?

# Repent!

by J.S. Smith • delivered 27 November 1994 • Austin, Texas

## Introduction

i. There is little confusion in the world about the need to repent but there is often confusion over what is necessary to the act. Repentance is important (“Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matt. 3:2 and Matt. 4:17)). As repentance is so important a condition in the gospel plan of salvation, it is important that we know what it is, that we may know when we have obeyed the divine mandate. In various forms, the word is used 106 times in the Bible. We will be concerned in this study only with the occasions in which the word is used for man and not God.

## Discussion

### I. What is Repentance?

#### A. Defined

1. when used in New Testament as a command to alien sinner
  - a. it always indicates a change of mind producing a change of life which warrants the logical conclusion that sorrow for past acts preceded it
  - b. invariably in such cases, a translation of the Greek μετανοιο (*metanoio*)
2. also the English word ‘repentance’ is used in the New Testament to indicate simply sorrow or regret
  - a. this is a poor translation of the Greek word μ μ μ (*metamelomai*)
  - b. this Greek word does not include the concept of repentance: a change of life and mind, but only a sorrow or regret
  - c. much confusion results from the lumping together of these two distinct ideas into one English word, ‘repentance’
3. an example of the difference in meaning: 2 Cor. 7:8-10
4. nothing makes the difference in these two words clearer than this passage
  - a. Paul wrote a letter which made them sorrowful; he regretted its tone
  - b. but he ceased to be regretful when he saw that their sorrow led them to repentance: a change of mind that led to their reformation

#### B. Characterized

1. the word “repentance” in the commission (Luke 24:47) and “repent” used by Peter (Acts 2:38 and 3:19) are from the Greek word μετανοιο, and not from μεταμελομαι
  - a. therefore, Jesus and Peter meant more than simply sorrow over past sins
  - b. more because that change of mind that we call ‘repentance’ always implies that sorrow for past sins preceded it
  - c. when the Jews in Jerusalem heard Peter on Pentecost, they were convinced that they had truly killed the Son of God
    1. they were pierced in their hearts and cried out, “Men and brethren, what shall we do (Acts 2:37)?”
    2. it is utterly obvious that this soul-stirring question came from men whose hearts were filled with deep sorrow for the sins from which they desperately pleaded for forgiveness
    3. and yet, still, Peter commanded them to ‘Repent...’
      - a. they had heard Peter preach and gained faith in Jesus
      - b. they felt godly sorrow over what they had done to him
      - c. but ‘godly sorrow’ itself is not repentance: 2 Cor. 7:9-10
      - d. godly sorrow precedes repentance but it is not repentance itself
        1. it is produced by respect for God and His violated law
        2. it produces a change of mind which leads to reformation of life
        3. worldly sorrow may be produced by that fact that the guilty person has been caught in his crime (receive frowns of men or punishment of judge)
        4. godly sorrow though has the purpose of reformation of life
  2. repentance in obedience to the command of the Holy Spirit must be more than being sad because someone caught you in a sin or being sad over what you did last night

- a. obedient repentance must be the firm commitment to reform your mind and life to never commit that offense again
- b. anything less than this commitment is sorrow, but not godly sorrow and is not repentance at all

## II. Exemplified

### A. In Works Befitting Repentance

- 1. God has granted repentance to the Gentiles (Acts 11:18)
- 2. Paul preached to them just as John had to the Jews: Acts 26:20 and Luke 3:3-14

### B. In Nineveh: Matthew 12:41

- 1. Jesus says that the residents of Nineveh repented at Jonah's preaching
- 2. if we can learn what the Ninevites did, we can learn what Jesus means when he says repentance
  - a. the prophet's mission and message: Jonah 1:1-2 and 3:1-4
  - b. the people's response: Jonah 3:5-10
    - 1. we see godly sorrow and we see repentance characterized by works befitting it
    - 2. we see God's repentance also

### C. David: 2 Sam. 11:1-4, 15

- 1. the words of God: 2 Sam. 12:1-7a, 13
- 2. sorrow evident: Psalm 51:1-3
- 5. God's forgiveness evident—still "a man after God's own heart" (Acts 13:22)

## III. Repentance is Not A Sin Waiver

### A. The Concept of Some

- 1. I'll sin tonight and repent tomorrow and everything will be all right
- 2. "I can have my sin and salvation, too."

### B. What's Wrong With That

- 1. you tell me where the godly sorrow is
- 2. that isn't even worldly sorrow: no sorrow at all!; where is the reformation?
- 3. Catholics have the doctrine of indulgences wherein a man may purchase waivers from the priest
  - a. something like this: "bearer is entitled to one night of fornication and intoxication at no expense to his soul"
  - b. Bible, please?
  - c. many Christians do the same thing by promising to repent when they sober up
  - d. it won't fly!

## Conclusion

If you need to repent, won't you do as Peter commanded and Paul described.

# Warming Your Hands At The Devil's Fire

by J.S. Smith • delivered 4 December 1994 • Austin, Texas

## Introduction

- i. [Read Mark 14:27-31.] Jesus was soon arrested and led to stand before the Sanhedrin.
- ii. [Read Mark 14:50-54.] Jesus was convicted and sentenced to death.
- iii. [Read Mark 14:66-72.] Do you ever behave as Peter did in relation to your Master?

## Discussion

### I. Following Jesus: At a Distance

#### A. The Necessity

1. we are strong only when we stick close to the Lord
2. he demands it: Mark 8:34-35
3. Paul said that he could do all things through Christ who strengthens him (Phil. 4:13)
4. we can only grow in Christ by walking close to him, we can only find solace for our souls and minds by keeping in touch with him through prayer
5. but Peter knew this

#### B. Following At a Distance

1. Peter knew Jesus was his Lord but out of fear, he decided to pull back from him and follow out of sight
2. there is a danger that like Peter, we might pull back from the Master and follow less closely
3. methods
  - a. we decrease our worship habits to Sundays only or Sunday morning only
    1. many in the world have decreased their habits to once a year
    2. some Christians are trending that way, too
    3. we're still following but not so close that it cramps our lifestyle
  - b. we decrease our home study habits
    1. if the preacher doesn't talk about it, it doesn't exist
    2. we still study the Bible (Sunday morning right before class starts), but not so much that our TV time suffers
  - c. we decrease our prayer habits
    1. we pray only when we really want something
    2. we still follow along when brother what's-his-name leads us
  - d. we don't make much noise about Jesus
    1. some could say that my family doesn't even know I go to church
    2. others that would never make co-workers or classmates uncomfortable by talking about Jesus
    3. I'm still here, Lord, but let's keep that just between us, okay?!

#### C. A Dangerous Policy: 1 Peter 5:5-11

1. there is above the mighty hand of God, but all around us lurks the roaring devil
2. safety exists only beneath the hand of God
3. here is His concern, grace, exclusive ability to perfect, establish, strengthen and settle his children as a father guides his with a strong hand; in Him is eventual glory: James 4:1-10
  - a. strife in the world comes from some coveting what they should not have or want
  - b. they beg for these things but they are not according to God's will
  - c. one either draws near to the devil or he draws near to God
    1. there is no middle ground described in this passage
    2. those who desire friendship with the world automatically make themselves enemies of God
    3. their friendship ultimately is with the devil
  - d. but one may submit himself to God and draw closer to the Father
    1. as he draws near to God, he inches further away from the devil
    2. as one draws closer to God (through prayer, study, righteousness and worship), the devil can't stand the light: he flees!: what a victory!
      - a. he draws to God by cleansing his hands and purifying his heart of this double mindedness

- b. he had tried to follow Jesus: but at a distance: he was double-minded (trying to straddle a fence and walk the middle of the road; but no more
- e. he humbles himself in the sight of God and is lifted up not by pride, but by grace

## II. Bad Company

### A. With Whom Was Peter?

1. he was not among the disciples and just as well, they had fled Jesus even further in this danger
2. but Peter was not close by the Lord either; he was among the servants in the courtyard
3. he preferred to be among them rather than beside Jesus
  - a. he denied that he even knew Jesus for fear that he would be thrust to the Lord's side
  - b. it was much simpler to lie and keep warming at the devil's fire with these faithless servants

### B. With Whom Are We?: Ephesians 5:1-17

1. Christians are children of God required to walk in God's will
2. yet, there are many in the world who would deceive the saint with empty words and we are not to become partakers with them
3. we are forbidden to have fellowship with them, for it is shameful even to speak of those things which are done by them in secret
  - a. we have friends who find nothing wrong with drinking and actually enjoy trying to convince us to give it a try
  - b. tell them to knock it off or leave!: Romans 12:1-2 and 1 Cor. 15:33

## III. Denying Your Lord

### A. What Peter Did

1. he told the servant girl about Jesus, "I neither know nor understand what you are saying."
2. he told her a second time in front of the other Col. d people, "I do not know the man."
3. later those servants were determined to nail him down and he became angered that no one would accept his lie, he began to curse and swear that he did not know the Lord at all!
4. denying Jesus makes him an unfriendly witness in the day of judgment: Matt. 10:32-33

### C. What We Do

1. at times, we might deny him directly, but more likely we deny him in the vain of Titus 1:16
  - a. when you sleep in on Sunday morning or stay home to watch Beverly Hills 90210 on Wednesday night, you say, I do not know the Man
  - b. when you lift the Budweiser, you say, I do not know the Man
  - c. when you take home an R rated movie that promises filthy language and gratuitous sex, you say, I do not know the Man.
  - d. when you gossip or curse, you say, I do not know the Man
2. we ought instead to confess him in the opposite way
  - a. when you arrive each service ready to worship, you say, I know the Man
  - b. when you refuse alcohol, cigarettes, and drugs, you say, I know the Man
  - c. when you confine yourself to wholesome entertainment, you say, I know the Man

## IV. Repentance

### A. What Peter Did (verse 72)

1. he thought about it
2. he came back and never strayed away again

### B. What You Must Do

1. do you hear a rooster crowing today?; think about it; go ahead and weep
2. repent and come back to Jesus's side and never stray again

## Conclusion

# The Vine and the Branches

by J.S. Smith • delivered 4 December 1994 • Austin, Texas

## Introduction

i. John 15 is a very simple passage with important teachings to lead Christians in service to God.

## Discussion

### I. The True Vine and Branches: John 15:1-8

#### A. Christians, The True Branches

1. Jesus was speaking to his disciples and the passage refers to individuals as the branches
2. prophets used the same imagery to describe the Jews' as a plant that God had planted (Isa. 5:1-7)
3. the image carries with it the reality of the antecedent from nature
  - a. a branch cannot survive on its own, separated from the vine
  - b. a branch that is severed from the vine will quickly wither and die
  - c. so Christians, branches, must remain attached to the vine and depend on it for sustenance

#### B. Jesus, The True Vine (Jer. 2:20-21)

1. a branch cannot survive apart from the vine
  - a. all nourishment and strength pass from the vine to the branch
  - b. there is no other way by which a vine can receive sustenance
2. these branches had become disciples of Jesus when he had removed their errant notions of him
  - a. he had reclaimed them from earthly ambitions for worldly honor
  - b. he had convinced them to forsake all things and people for kingdom
  - c. he had trained and disciplined them to serve him once he ascended
  - d. they had renounced lives without him; had followed him faithfully
3. they had been purified or cleansed by his words, both of wisdom and salvation: John 8:30-36
  - a. He spoke *words* and many believed in Him thereby
  - b. Jesus told them that if they abided in His words that they would know the truth and freed
  - c. the freedom will be from slavery to sin: Rom. 6:16-23
    1. those who obey that form of doctrine that God breathed become slaves of righteousness
    2. their fruit was in things that are evil or ungodly and lead to death
    3. but now, their fruit is to holiness which leads to everlasting life
4. Jesus's command was for his disciples, his branches, to abide in him; what else could branch do?
  - a. obviously, there is a choice to make in the matter or there wouldn't be a command
  - b. it was commanded in verse 2 that each branch bear fruit and a necessary enabler to bearing fruit is described in verse 4—abide in Christ: 1 John 3:1-9 and Gal. 5:22-25
  - c. branch that makes requests according to the word in the interest of fruitfulness will receive it

#### C. God, The Vine Dresser: Matt. 7:15-23

1. some branches, Christians, do not bear fruit
  - a. verse 2 says they are taken away
  - b. verse 6 adds that they are cast out and withered before being gathered and thrown into a fire
    1. rose bush example
    2. the message here is the same for those Christians that do not abide in the branch and do not bear fruit
      - a. a man may make a tearful repentance and confession and may feel cleansed in baptism
      - b. but when trials cloud his life and his faith is tested, he begins to stray away from God
      - c. his zeal languishes and his study is forgotten, prayer is neglected
      - d. he is like that branch on my bush that bears nothing and the end is the same
  3. how God removes unfruitful branches
    - a. by church discipline
    - b. by suffering temptations and trials that either solidify faith, weaken or destroy it
    - c. by suffering temptations to come in the form of riches, etc.; by eternal death in damnation
2. but some branches bear fruit and God, the vine dresser, prunes them
  - a. some Christians live in such a way that their faith spreads to others and fruit is borne for God

- b. these God prunes like a branch that bears much fruit so that it might bear even more
  - 1. by removing hindrances to growth and production; increasing knowledge and ability
  - 2. allowing trials that test but prove one's faith; removing idols from life

## II. Denominational Spin

### A. "Branches Are Denominations"

- 1. in trying to justify their existence and non-Biblical name, many point to this passage and claim that Jesus was sanctioning the division of His church into various branches
- 2. the passage though teaches nothing of the sort

### B. Sectarianism Was Condemned In The Bible: 1 Cor. 1:10-13

- 1. unity was upheld
- 2. Jesus built His church (Matt. 16) and Paul was a member of it when he taught on the one true church: Eph. 4:4 and Eph. 1:22-23

### C. The Vine and The Branches?

- 1. Methodist church: faith only and infant baptism
- 2. Baptist church: faith only and some foot-washing; 25 varieties
- 3. Lutheran church: protest against Catholic church
- 4. Jehovah's Witnesses: Premillennialism, non-deity of Jesus
- 5. Latter Day Saints (Mormons): Bible is not sufficient, polygamy, degrees of salvation
- 6. Church of Christ: Bible is only guide; established by Jesus in the first century
- 7. Roman Catholic Church: holy water, purgatory, toe-kissing
- 8. Seventh Day Adventist: sabbath keeping
- 9. Christian Science: Bible is incomplete; Christ not incarnate; suffering and illness unreal
- 10. Church of the Nazarene: direct work of Holy Spirit; sprinkling and healing
- 11. Unity church: focus on social and feel-good message
- 12. Christian Church: baptism necessary; missionary societies and social centers

### D. A Strange Vine (Example: Tomato Vine)

1. watermelon	red, juicy	Methodist church
2. cherry	tiny and sweet	Baptist church
3. lemon	yellow and sour	Lutheran church
4. olive	small and bitter	Jehovah's Witnesses
5. lime	green and sour	Latter Day Saints (Mormons)
6. tomato	red and juicy	church of Christ
7. apple	large and red	Roman Catholic Church
8. strawberry	red and sweet	Seventh Day Adventist
9. cucumber	green, good with vinegar	Christian Science
10. orange	orange and juicy	Church of the Nazarene
11. pear	odd shape; yellow	Unity church
12. grapes	purple and bite size	Christian Church

## III. Reality

### A. True Vine

- 1. saints at every bud; no churches on vine
- 2. even New Testament church is not a branch of the vine; only saints are branches of the vine

### B. The Relationship

- 1. branches depend on the vine for everything
- 2. God is the vine dresser

## Conclusion

# Increase Our Faith

by J.S. Smith • delivered 11 December 1994 • Austin, Texas

## Introduction

i. Jesus taught on mercy in the sermon on the mount. “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy” (Matt. 5:7), he said in the list of beatitudes. Mercy or forgiveness is something that is given freely by God to those who request it but often times it is difficult for man to extend mercy to his brethren. Let us study this characteristic and learn how we might improve ourselves.

## Discussion

### I. The Parable of the Unforgiving Servant Discussed

#### A. Peter’s Question and Jesus’s Answer: Matt. 18:20-22

1. the mention of the duty of forgiving a brother in verse 15 led Peter to wonder just how long he was to forgive a brother who wrongs him

a. Peter was being generous in proposing that he forgive a brother seven times

b. the Jewish custom had become three times and then no more (based on the book of Amos and Job 33:29-30)

c. by suggesting seven, he was allowing four more offenses than was customary in Judaism

2. Jesus’s answer though went far beyond Jewish custom and the generosity of man

a. Jesus proclaimed that a Christian must forgive a brother who wrongs him seventy times seven

1. is this 490 times?

a. this is not a command to buy a thick ledger book and keep track of all offenses committed against yourself

b. 1 Cor. 13:5 carries with it the implication in the Greek that love keeps no record of wrongs.

1. the meaning is figurative: there is simply no fixed number upon which we may cut off our mercy

2. as often as a brother injures us and begs forgiveness, we are to extend mercy

2. the conclusion is that man exercises no right or liberty in determining whether or not he will extend forgiveness for a personal offense: he must

b. there is duty on the parts of both brethren: Luke 17:3-4

1. it is the erring brother’s duty to ask for mercy

2. it is the wronged brother’s duty to grant it

3. yet even if he does not ask for it, we are not free to treat him with malice (Rom. 12:10-21)

4. we hear that and say to ourselves, that sounds difficult: Luke 17:5

#### B. The King’s Mercy: Matt. 18:23-27

1. Jesus said it will be in the church as it is with a certain king who decided to settle accounts with his servants

2. these servants were most likely tax Collectors sent out by the king to gather what was due him from his subjects

a. there was one brought before him that owed the king ten thousand talents

b. this was converted by the commentators of the nineteenth century to equal about \$16 million

3. this servant was unable to pay what he owed and the king commanded that he be sold along with his family and all his possessions to secure payment

a. this is wage garnishment in the extreme

b. it was permissible under Hebrew law to do so

4. but the servant fell before his king and begged for patience

a. “Master, have patience with me, and I will pay you all.”

b. note that exact phrase

5. the king saw his sorrow and had compassion on him, forgiving him all that debt

a. imagine the bank told you it was prepared to erase your home loan

b. this is yet nothing compared to what the king was prepared to do

#### C. The Servant’s Lack of Mercy: Matt. 18:28-34

1. that newly forgiven servant went out with his enormous burden lifted

2. he found a fellow-servant, one on equal level with him who owed him
  - a. the sum was a hundred denarii: about \$15
  - b. this sum is far less than what had been owed and forgiven by the king
3. he didn't act as his king had in dealing with his debt, though
  - a. he took the man by the throat and demanded, "Pay me what you owe!"
  - b. the command was in reality the same as what the king had demanded of him
4. his fellow servant fell down at his feet and begged him
  - a. "Have patience with me, and I will pay you all."
  - b. this too is exactly the same request the first servant made to the king
  - c. would the response be the same?
5. no, he would not forgive the debt, a relative pittance
  - a. he had him thrown in the prison until the debt was paid
  - b. he had learned nothing by the king's example
6. the other servants saw what happened
  - a. they were grieved as any of us are when we witness an act of cruelty perpetrated on a brother
  - b. they told their master all that had been done, presumably that the unfortunate situation might be corrected
7. the king called the first servant back before him
  - a. he accused him of wickedness: of receiving mercy, yet granting none
  - b. the king asserts that he should have followed his example instead
  - c. the king sentenced the first servant to the bonds of torturers

## II. The Parable Explained: Forgiveness is Important: Matt. 18:35

### A. The King's Mercy (Matt. 18:23-27)

1. God is the antecedent character in this parable, the king
  - a. all we, as sinners, have gone astray and yet the gospel of Jesus Christ leads us to kneel before God's throne of mercy
  - b. our abuse of God's law has made us feeble debtors to our King
    1. \$16 million would not begin to cover a reckoning of our account with God
    2. only the blood of Jesus could cover that bill (Acts 20:28) and Jesus paid the price on the cross
  - c. we knelt down before God and begged his mercy
  - d. God forgave us all
    1. here is the mercy of God upon those who owe him more than could ever be paid
    2. God hears the penitent prayers of men and witnesses them bowing at his throne in humility and obedience to the gospel and gladly grants it
    2. the point is God's mercy is of such magnitude and covers offenses of such vastness, our gratitude ought to be inspiring in our lives

### C. The Servant's Lack of Mercy (Matt. 18:28-34)

1. we are that first, forgiven servant, fresh with the mercy of God in Christ Jesus, if we go out (cease to abide in Christ, but go beyond or outside of Jesus's path)
2. the record of our debt, our sins against God has been forgiven
3. but in the course of life, a brother commits a trespass against us
  - a. we tell our brother his error and wait and hope that he asks mercy
  - b. but when he does, we refuse to grant it, hanging on to the grudge like a precious \$15 debt
4. although God has forgiven us \$16 million worth of debt and much more, we cannot bring ourselves to excuse \$15 worth and much less
5. the danger is obvious from this passage to those who will not show mercy
  - a. punishment awaits at the hand of God: received mercy can be forfeited
  - b. we must forgive: not just by saying it: but from the heart!
    1. "Increase our faith."
    2. more is required than just saying, "I forgive you."
      - a. that trespass must be remembered no more, not brought up again
      - b. the hatchet must be buried and not in your brother's back

### III. The New Testament on Forgiveness

#### A. Luke 6:27-38

1. do good to those who harm you
2. pray for them
3. turn the other cheek
4. do unto others as you would have them do unto you
5. even sinners love those who love them: you show faith when you love those who do not
6. be merciful even as God is merciful
7. as in the parable, mercy will be granted to us as we have granted to others

#### B. Romans 12:10-21

1. exercise brotherly love
2. bless those who do you harm
3. repay no one evil for evil done; have regard for good things not vengeance
4. strive to live at peace with all
5. do not avenge yourselves
6. kill them with kindness
7. when done evil, do not be overcome with the urge to reciprocate, rather overcome evil by doing good

#### C. Colossians 3:12-15

1. put on tender mercies
2. bear with one another, forgive one another as Christ forgave you: *you must also do*
3. let the peace of God rule your hearts and be grateful for God's forgiveness
  - a. that's the peace: God's forgiveness
  - b. let that rule your hearts
  - c. your heart will rule your actions and you will be a merciful servant

#### D. James 2:13

1. "For judgment is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment."
2. we must learn

### **Conclusion**

Let us show mercy and be forgiving.



# As Christ and the Church: The Husband's Role in Marriage

by J.S. Smith • delivered 11 December 1994 • Austin, Texas

## Introduction

i. God's model for married love is instituted in Genesis 2 but there is a passage of timeless and insightful instruction in the New Testament. Ephesians 5 teaches on the mutual roles and special roles that husband and wife play in a marriage relationship. This lesson deals with the husband's roles.

## Discussion

### I. Mutual Roles of Both Husband and Wife

#### A. First Obligation Is Always to God

1. marriage is God-given and divinely directed
  - a. both marriage partners have a supreme obligation to God
    1. although one partner might not be a Christian, that does not excuse him or her from God's law
    2. all will be judged by the same law in the end and all live by the same law of Christ now
    3. choosing to live outside the law of Christ does not eliminate one's amenability to it
  - b. from this responsibility to God come mutual roles that each must fulfill to one another
2. marriage covenant does not nullify the husband or wife's duty to God: Matt. 10:34-38
  - a. person's obligation to God sometimes causes marital strife
  - b. God must take precedence in such a dispute: Luke 18:28-29
    1. the implication here is not abandonment or divorce, but rather a desire to serve God and at times that leads a man away from home for a period of time
    2. the point is that God must reign superior in one's life
    3. the heavenly reward should far outweigh the temporal ones
  - c. the Christian will always love a mate best by loving God first

#### B. Self-Sacrifice

1. married mates are under the law of self-sacrifice to others
2. husband and wife share equally as heirs of the grace of life (1 Peter 3:7)
3. husband and wife are to subject themselves to one another because they are Christians, not because they are married
  - a. Philippians 2:3-5: many men think this law is nullified by the preacher when he says "Kiss the bride."
    1. it is apparent that some took their liberty in Christ as a license to cast aside all earthly authority in life, from civil powers to domestic life
    2. Paul says not so and commands subjection to one another throughout chapters 5 and 6
    3. many men think the wife forfeits this from her Bible when she says, "I do."
  - b. "submitting to one another in the fear of God" (Eph. 5:21)
    1. it is apparent that some took their liberty in Christ as a license to cast aside all earthly authority in life, from civil powers to domestic life
    2. Paul says not so and commands subjection to one another throughout chapters 5 and 6
    3. many men think the wife forfeits this from her Bible when she says, "I do."

### II. God Has Given Order To All His Creations

#### A. Order in Marriage

1. God has given order to the institution of marriage just as he has to all things
2. God is not the author of confusion but of peace (1 Cor. 14:33)
3. there should be no confusion about marital roles
  - a. even in our day when the world seems to be busy casting aside Biblical marital roles
  - b. recent studies and polls show the media is portraying the change as more revolutionary than it really is, anyway

#### B. God's Order Will Stand Forever

1. regardless, you have no scriptural authority to toss aside God's wisdom in marriage as too old-fashioned, antiquated or out-dated: 1 Peter 1:22-25
2. 1 Cor. 11:3

### III. The Husband's Role: Headship

#### A. Introduced: Eph. 5:23-24

1. the wife is to be submissive to her husband as Christ was to God
2. it is necessary to note that God never expressed an influence to sin upon Jesus and so the subjection is limited in marriage to that which does not violate God's superior commands
3. it also necessary to note that the wife is not inferior to the husband
  - a. Jesus is not inferior to God, though he did submit to Him
  - b. the wife is not inferior to her husband in any way: the roles are simply different

**B. Love Your Wife As Jesus Loved the Church: Eph. 5:25-27**

1. he loved it so much that he was willing to perish for its life
2. Jesus sacrificed all that he had for his bride and devoted his life to her
3. so should a husband be willing to sacrifice anything for his bride and devote himself to her spiritual and emotional welfare

**C. Love Your Wife As Your Own Body: Eph. 5:28-31**

1. a husband is commanded in the exercise of his headship to love his wife as he loves himself
2. men cherish and nourish their bodies and they should treat their wives as a part of their very own body: "the two are one flesh", remember
  - a. Paul remarks that no one was ever so foolish to hate his own body and purposely inflict damage upon it
    - b. why would any man inflict harm upon his wife
      1. some men find it amusing to refer to their wives as the "ball and chain"
      2. others prefer to demean her by blaming her for everything and bellowing when things are not just right
      3. some men terrorize their wives with physical force and threat
      4. others demand sexual submission without mutual consent
    - c. no one would ever do the same to himself, why do it to your wife
    - d. in fact, a man and wife are one flesh
      1. what affects the wife affects the husband automatically and vice versa
      2. when a husband does damage to his wife's body, soul, or spirit, he sins and abuses his headship
      3. no where does the Bible describe marriage as slavery or as a dictatorship
        - a. I know men who order their wives to permit them to stay out late at night and drink and gamble and who knows what else under the auspices of their "headship"
        - b. that's not headship, that's a dictatorship and it won't fly

**IV. The Husband's Role: According to Knowledge and With Honor: 1 Peter 3:7**

**A. Dwell With Them With Understanding**

1. understanding the will of God in marriage as we have discussed
2. and with understanding of their personalities and concerns
  - a. you should know your wife: it takes time, of course
  - b. you should show concern for those facets of her personality

**B. Honor Her As The Weaker Vessel and a Sister (If Also a Christian)**

1. calling her the ball and chain is not honor
2. speaking ill of her to other men is not honor
3. treating her like a house servant is not honor
4. cherishing her and nourishing her is honor

**Conclusion**

# The Instrument For Musical Worship

by J.S. Smith • delivered 18 December 1994 • Austin, Texas

## Introduction

i. The Bible speaks loudly to the music we are to offer in worship to him. God does not leave us to wander in ignorance, but instead tell us exactly what he expects.

## Discussion

### I. Worship Can Be True or False

#### A. Jesus's Command: John 4:23-24

1. we must examine ourselves against the scriptures ("the Truth")
2. are we in this group?

#### B. Worship Can Be False: Matt. 15:8-9

1. acts done supposedly in his name, but without any authority are false
2. we must have Jesus's authority as we act in his name' understand and do
  - a. "Do all in the name of the Lord" (Col. 3:17); Eph. 5:17-19
  - b. if there is an instrument that should be in our musical worship, we need to identify it today

### II. Origin of Mechanical Instruments of Music Into Religious Worship

#### A. Introduction

1. you can read through your New Testament just as the men I am about to introduce you to did and search for evidence of mechanical instruments of music in worship
2. there isn't any there, though, as they found and as you'll find
3. it was about 670 A.D., pope Vitilian I introduced the organ; division in Catholic church
  - a. it was removed (*American Encyclopedia*, vol. XII, page 688)
  - b. after several centuries of other departures from scripture in organization, doctrine and worship, it was back to stay

#### B. Subsequent Denominations Have balked at First

1. John Calvin of Presbyterian church compared it to bringing back burning incense and other shadows of the old law (*Calvin's Commentary on 33rd Psalm*).
2. John Wesley of Methodist church said he would not oppose it being in the meeting place so long as it was neither seen nor heard (*Clarke's Commentary*, Vol. IV, page 686).
3. Adam Clarke, another Methodist, concurred, adding that instrumental music in worship is an abomination and abuse of music and understood its origin to be the pagan Catholic church; against spirit and truth principle (*ibid*).
4. Charles Spurgeon, a Baptist preacher, appealed to 1 Cor. 14:15 and said, "I would as soon to pray to God with machinery as to sing to God with machinery."
5. Andrew Fuller, a respected Baptist scholar, could find no example in the Bible or in the first three centuries A.D. of Christians using instruments in religion (*Works of Andrew Fuller*, vol. III, page 520).
6. Thomas Aquinas referred to instrumental music in worship as Judaizing (*McClintock and Strong's Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological and Ecclesiastical Literature*, Vol. 8, page 739).
7. Martin Luther called the organ the ensign of Baal (*ibid*).

#### C. Departure Over instrumental music in worship Began in 1850s

1. many denominations added it; . melodeon turned up in Midway KY in 1859
2. one of the first issues to separate Christian church from New Testament

### III. The Men of This Latter Era Sought Scriptural Support For instrumental music in worship

#### A. They Pointed Back to Old Testament Worship

1. used in temple, but not in tabernacle or synagogue
  - a. but all commands and authority of old law were nailed to cross (Col. 2:14); Heb. 7:12, 8:13, 10:9
  - b. what about other OT acts of worship--shall we take them, too?--animal sacrifice, days of

purification and laws on hygiene?

- c. actually, worship and organization of church was an adaptation of Jewish synagogue
  1. Jews began synagogues during exile when they could not go to Jerusalem to worship
  2. synagogues had elders, sermons, readings, prayers--but no instrumental music in worship
  3. first synagogue with it was in Berlin, 1815
2. David did it
  - a. law was for those under it, not Christians (Rom. 3:19)
  - b. if you're going to appeal to part, you must keep all: James 2:10
  - c. with all Old Testament commands nailed to cross, we must rely on New Testament and upon Christ to lead us: James 4:12

#### B. They Pointed Ahead to Man's Authority

1. some said we don't need authority for every thing we do; God will appreciate our innovations
2. without New Testament authority, they had to appeal to man's authority to make doctrine
3. no such authority ; it is sinful to go beyond word of God (2 John 9): Lev. 10:1-2
4. Cain made an offering to God that he had not commanded and was rebuked for his innovation

#### C. They Appealed to Biblical Silence

1. New Testament doesn't say do not!; milk and cookies for Lord's Supper?
2. when God tells us how to do something, he doesn't have to tell us specifically not to do everything else
  - a. we ought to be wise enough to take God's plan and follow it to the letter
  - b. when God told us what to use for the Lord's Supper, he didn't have to tell us not to use cheeseburgers and Orange Crush, did He?; why is it any different with musical worship?

#### D. They Pointed Outside the Church to Instruments in Heaven: Rev. 14:2-3

1. not the church here, but heaven
2. as thunder, waters, and harps (symbolism of Revelation)

#### E. They Claimed That Instrumental Music in Worship Is Only an Aid, Not An Addition

1. some say instruments blend with voice to create one sound
- 2 just like this microphone?
3. mechanical instruments are a different kind of music, though
4. strange fire again

#### F. One Argument Never Made

1. that we must add instrumental music in worship to be correct
2. none go this far yet

### IV. The One Instrument In New Testament Musical Worship

#### A. Command to

1. to sing; simply to sing (103): Rev. 14:3, Rev. 15:3, Rev. 5:9, Col. 3:16, Eph. 5:19
2. no mention, evidence or hint of any instrument accompanying the command to sing

#### B. Command to $\mu$

1. to sing a hymn; to celebrate God in song (5214): Mark 14:26, Heb. 2:12, Acts 16:25, Matt. 26:30
2. context, text, and definitions--again no mention, evidence or hint of any instrument accompanying the command to sing

#### C. Command to

1. does not mean sing at all, rather means to pluck, pull, or twang as of a beard, hair or stringed instrument (5567); ah, here there may be a mention of an instrument
  - a. this is the only Greek word that will allow for some instrument
  - b. we'll have to check the context to see what that instrument is
    1. to know the use of the word "psallo", meaning must come from the context--what is being

plucked?

2. just as baptize means only to immerse and the medium for immersion must come from context
3. so psallo means “to pluck” and the thing plucked must be described in the context

2. Rom. 15:9: sing unto thy name; James 5:13: sing psalms; 1 Cor. 14:15: sing with spirit; 1 Cor. 14:15: sing with understanding

a. if the command here is to pluck an instrument, then each and every one of us must play an instrument to worship correctly!

b. Paul specifies the instrument to be played in Ephesians 5:19 (make “psallontes” with the heart!)

1. if instruments are in these verses, instruments would *always* be necessary

a. Paul and Silas in prison—instruments?

b. all a Capella would be sin; extremely difficult command, if true

c. we would all have to have an instrument-- imagine the church meeting in Jerusalem shortly after Pentecost—what a racket!

2. history tells us that the earliest Christians did not use instrumental music in worship

a. instrument to pluck is heart: Eph. 5:19

b. make “psallontes,” pluckings, with the heart

c. this is the only instrument the New Testament describes in singing

### **Conclusion**

There is an instrument which we must pluck in our musical worship—the heart.



# God's Plumb Line

by J.S. Smith • delivered 18 December 1994 • Austin, Texas

## Introduction

- i. [Read Amos 7:7-10.]
- ii. The prophet, Amos, had a vision of a plumb line in the eighth century before Christ. A plumb line is a string weighted at the end which when hanging down can be used to determine the vertical perfection of a wall. The pull of gravity causes that string to stretch straight downward and is considered a perfect standard of straightness. Amos saw that God had positioned his plumb line against the wall of obedience of Israel and found it anything but straight.
- iii. Amos was just another in the line of preachers of the Old Testament who were reviled for preaching the Truth of God. Preachers of truth are reviled today. Not just by those outside of Christ, but by brethren, just as Amos and the others endured.
- iv. [Read Eph. 6:19-20.]

## Discussion

### I. Some Bold Preachers

#### A. Moses

1. received the law: Exodus 19:3-9
2. the people were impressed by the magnificence of God: Exodus 20:18-21
3. they made a commitment: Exodus 24:3-7
4. they departed as their faith in God shrunk in perilous times: Exodus 32:1-6
5. Moses was a harsh preacher who didn't consider their self-esteem: Exodus 32:19-20
  - a. sin made the preacher angry
  - b. he used that hatred for sin to show them the bitterness of their transgression: Exodus 32:21-25
    1. the blame for transgression went partly to the leaders who defined truth by public sentiment and the swirling winds of public opinion
    2. leaders who scratched itching ears were held responsible
    3. the sin of God's people was not self-contained in the church of Israel: Exodus 32:26
      - a. Moses preached repentance
      - b. where is his psychology?
      - c. where does he teach them to win friends and influence people?
      - d. why doesn't he consider their self-esteem?!?!
6. what was wrong with him?

#### B. Josiah

1. he was basically a good person, not perfect: 2 Kings 22:1-2
2. then the Book of the Law was found in his eighteenth year on the throne: who knows how long it had been missing?
  - a. 2 Kings 22:8-10: "oh, by the way" attitude of Shaphan
  - b. not so with King Josiah: 2 Kings 22:11-13
  - c. this was done
    1. the prophetess sent word that Judah was to fall to Babylon because of her wickedness
    2. there was also a message specifically for Josiah: 2 Kings 22:18-20
3. after he found the instruction manual, Josiah wasted no time in bringing Judah in line with it
  - a. he read them God's will: 2 Kings 23:2
  - b. he committed himself to God: 2 Kings 23:3
  - c. he restored true worship in the rest of the chapter
4. Josiah believed that the word of God was understandable and could be obeyed
  - a. he didn't preach that controversial matters were really gray areas
  - b. he didn't allow a little sin in the name of tolerance or unity in diversity
5. what was wrong with him?

#### C. Jeremiah

1. in the opening chapters of his prophetic record, Israel is accused and convicted of all manner of sin

from idolatry to adultery to hatred

2. Jeremiah was the youth charged with delivering the accusation to Israel
3. Jeremiah preaches repentance: Jeremiah 3:6-15
4. Israel would not return: Jeremiah 5:1-3
  - a. they trusted false prophets who disputed Jeremiah's prophecy
    1. Jeremiah foretold destruction on Israel
    2. the false prophets cried that there would yet be "Peace, Peace." but there was no peace
  - b. Jeremiah's prophecy was read to King Jehoiakim
    1. he didn't like to hear the Truth: Jeremiah 36:20-23
    2. he tried to destroy the Truth but God's truth will not die (1 Peter 1:24-25)
    3. God commanded Jeremiah to rewrite it: Jeremiah 36:32
  - c. he preached the truth anyway: no market surveys to give the customer what he wants
5. what was wrong with him?

#### D. Ezra

1. Ezra heard that the temple was being reconstructed and he begged the king to let him go to Jerusalem to teach the Law
2. he knew that the way of God was his only hope and that depending upon men was faulty: Ezra 8:21-23
3. Ezra discovered that the people of God believed and were practicing error in Marriage: they had broken God's prohibition against taking wives from the idolatrous lands of their conquest
  - a. Ezra 9:3-4: he sat astonished all day long at the transgression against God
  - b. he preached repentance: Ezra 9:10-15
  - c. the people repented of all things!
    1. expressed sorrow; promised never to do it again: Ezra 10:1-4, 11-12
    2. Ezra had convinced them that their happy marriages were but filth in the eyes of God and would condemn their souls to hell: 115 relationships made right: Ezra 10:44
    3. is Ezra some kind of a home wrecker or what?
  - d. he demanded the division of families as compliance to what he preached: 115 of them!
4. what was wrong with him?

## II. Why Such Bold Preaching?

### A. It Was Called For Then

1. all of these situations share things in common
  - a. truth was an established fact: law of Moses reigned
  - b. people broke the law of God
    1. they had transgressed his covenant
    2. they were slapping him in the face in the presence of the world
    3. they stood condemned
  - c. some man was called upon either directly or indirectly to preach repentance
  - d. those men did preach repentance
    1. no other message would do
    2. Moses could have praised their industriousness and camaraderie
    3. Jeremiah could have preached peace, peace, too: God's will would be done anyway and no one would listen
    4. Josiah could have kept it to himself: Judah was doomed anyway
    5. Ezra could have taught them how to have happy marriages instead of telling them that they were really just living in sin
2. but these same characteristics are present today, too

### B. It Is Called For Today

1. today's situation has these same factors
  - a. Truth is an established fact: God has spoken: 1 Peter 4:11, John 12:48
  - b. people are breaking the law of God: Rom. 2:21-24
    1. they transgress his covenant as they alter everything he says to fit their own lives and desires

- 2. they slap him in the face in the world's presence as they do so
- 3. many are going to their soul's destruction
- c. men have been called upon through the word of God to preach repentance: Luke 24:47
  - 1. no other message will do
  - 2. we could praise the tolerance of the Romans 14 revisionists
  - 3. we could preach peace, peace, while making ourselves enemies of God: James 4:4; are we fly-catchers?: 2 Cor. 2:17
  - 4. we could keep the truth to ourselves: so many are doomed anyway
  - 5. we could tell those in adulterous marriages to stay there instead of breaking up happy homes with the Lord's teaching in Matt. 19 and elsewhere
- 2. preach the word: 2 Timothy 4:1-5
  - a. charged before God and Jesus
  - b. they will judge
  - c. *Preach the Word*
    - 1. not your innovations
    - 2. not the opinions of Billy Graham, Dr. Spock and Dale Carnegie
    - 3. you must convince, rebuke and exhort with patience and teaching
    - 4. the time has come that many will not endure sound doctrine
      - a. preachers are fired
      - b. friendships and families mean more than Truth and the Father
    - 5. they heap unto themselves a party of teachers who scratch their ears and make them feel good; they don't preach repentance
    - 6. their ears turn aside from the truth and listen to fairy tales
    - 7. be circumspect, endure the affliction of the day, preach the word
    - 8. take a stand for the covenant

### **Conclusion**

Bold preaching is called for. A preacher doesn't have to rant and rave each time he steps into the pulpit but he must always preach repentance. God will always examine the world with His plumb line and his preachers must examine the walls we build to determine if they will stand or if they should be demolished. Only the walls built without him should be torn down. We are building these walls every day with false doctrine and tolerance. It is time to check the plumb line.



# Four Sobering Facts

by J.S. Smith • delivered 25 December 1994 • Austin, Texas

## Introduction

i. We want to pause this evening and reflect upon four Biblical facts that call for universal concern and solemnity. The souls of men are at stake as we examine four sobering facts from God's will and coming judgment. This is a lesson about the choice between two roads.

## Discussion

### I. All Will Not Be Saved

#### A. Universal Salvation is a Myth

1. those who misunderstand God's love and despise his justice believe that He will save all in the end
2. how could he let anyone go to hell?
3. how could he be so unjust as to make rules and then throw them out at the end?
4. why did God reveal his will and why did Jesus have to die if everyone will be saved regardless of any relationship with God

#### B. All Will Be Judged

1. universal judgment is scriptural: John 5:28-29
2. Rom. 1:28-32 is a list of sins that will prevent someone from salvation
3. judgment will come on all: Rom. 2:1-11

#### C. "Not Everyone"

1. Matthew 7:12-14: the road to take
2. Matthew 7:21-23: not everyone will be saved!

### II. The Majority of People Will Be Lost

#### A. "Few There Are"

1. the gate is narrow
2. few choose to walk the difficult way

#### B. Always Been the Case: 1 Peter 3:20-21

1. three were saved from the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah
  - a. so very few
  - b. included in the lost was one promised salvation upon the condition that she not look back on the filth of the cities: "Remember Lot's wife."
2. in America
  - a. eight percent of the nation's population attend Sunday morning worship services faithfully
  - b. two percent attend Sunday night services and only 1 percent come on Wednesday night

### III. Many Will Perish That Expect to Be Saved

#### A. Many Religious People Will Be Lost

1. those who worship outside of spirit and truth: Matthew 15:9
2. those who treat the Bible like a buffet: James 2:10 and 2 Peter 1:5-11

#### B. Faith Must Be Active

1. dead faith is worthless
2. James 1:21-27 and James 2:24-26

### IV. This May Be The Last Opportunity For Someone Here Today

#### A. There Is No Salvation After Death

1. Hebrews 9:27
2. Acts 17:30-31

**B. There Is No Assurance of Tomorrow**

1. Proverbs 27:1

2. James 4:14 and 1 Thess. 5:2

**Conclusion**

Won't you be baptized today?

# A Daily Commitment

by J.S. Smith • delivered 25 December 1994 • Austin, Texas

## Introduction

i. Being a disciple of Jesus Christ takes more than an annual relationship or commitment. It requires that I walk just as he walked every day: that is the most spiritual thing I can do and say. A daily commitment to God is required for one who desires to see Jesus one day in heaven.

## Discussion

### I. What Does God Ask of Us?

#### A. We Must Love Him: Mark 12:28-30

1. this verse perhaps more than any shows the total commitment to God that He commands of his children

2. heart, soul, mind, and strength (λογικως): the latter implying “to the extent of one’s ability”

3. the command to love God sums up all that we must do in relation to Him in order to please Him and maintain a good relationship with Him

#### B. Specifically

1. he commands that we believe in him, confess him and render obedience in the waters of baptism for the remission of our sins

2. he commands that we maintain a proper relationship with him through abiding attention and obedience to his will

a. he commands that we gather on the first day of the week to worship him publicly

b. he commands that we worship him in all that we do every day: Rom. 3:17

1. before doing anything questionable, test it: can I do this in the name of the Lord

2. can I go to this place of entertainment and take Jesus there with me?

3. can I stay home on Wednesday night and watch TV with the Lord: or might he be more interested in what is going on over on Wonsley Drive than what is going on at Melrose Place?

a. perhaps though, God’s command to gather to worship is burdensome

1. alas, God gives us only 168 hours a week, how dare he expect four and a half of them back in the form of assembled worship?: the nerve!

2. all Jesus did was die for us: how dare he expect us to remember him around the table each Sunday?

3. but you say, “I would never say that or even think that.”

a. oh yeah, remember your actions speak louder than your words

b. Jesus said to keep his commands: do you do that?

b. John said that God’s commands are not burdensome in 1 John 5:3

1. what do your actions say?

2. I wonder if Jesus was tired as he hung on that cross

3. you know what: he hanged there longer than he expects you to sit here each week!

#### C. We Show This Love In What We Do: John 14:15

1. one may say that he loves Jesus, but the proof is in the facts: does he keep the Lord’s commandments

2. there are a million people in the world who claim to love Jesus but the facts betray them

a. I know those who claim to love Him in between using filthy language

b. I know those who claim to love Him in between nights at the local bar

c. I know those who claim to love Him but have forgotten way to the meeting house: 1 John 2:3-6

3. with some, it is not even a question of loving the Lord, it is as if you don’t know him at all

a. one who claims to know the Lord and be close to Him betrays his assertion when he lives as a foreigner from His words

b. you can call yourself a Christian: you can have T-shirts made up with Christian printed all over them: you can legally change your name to Joe Christian,

4. but if you do not abide in the gospel, it doesn’t mean a thing!

a. there may be some Joe Christians and Jane Christians in this audience

- b. He who wears the name but rejects his words is a liar!
  - 1. you may think I am not very spiritual because I talk so much about the law of Christ, you may call me a legalist
    - a. but is there any greater honor I can give to Jesus than obeying every word he uttered?
    - b. is there anything more spiritual than total devotion to his every teaching?
  - 2. you may fool men, but “the Lord knows those who are His” (2 Tim. 2:19)
    - a. instead of worrying whether or not brother Jeff or brother Alton knows if you are abiding in Christ you should be concerned with what Jesus is seeing in your life
    - b. you might hide any number of things from us but you’ll never hide anything from Him!

## II. The Hardening of Men’s Hearts

### A. God’s Commands Are Not Burdensome

- 1. believe, repent, confess and be baptized
- 2. walk in Christ: be disciples in deed

### B. But Some Are Overtaken By a Spirit of Procrastination

- 1. Christians who promise to become more active next year
  - a. or when they retire or get older have set God’s work aside temporarily for their own
  - b. His work is neglected while theirs is zealously undertaken
  - c. many teenagers who promise to come to Christ when they get out of school or get done having fun are putting God’s work aside for their own
  - d. but now is the time for God and for salvation
- 2. many hold to a myth that the God will exercise a different kind of mercy upon mankind in judgment than what is described in the Bible
  - a. you are gambling on something God has never mentioned
  - b. gambling with your very soul and its eternity!
- 3. some procrastinate because of God’s patience
  - a. they count God’s patience in allowing them to continue to live until now as a sign that their lack of concern for Him will never catch up with them: Romans 2:4-5
    - 1. but God will judge all according to his works
    - 2. don’t count patience as sign that the situation isn’t urgent, that repentance and an orderly walk can wait a while longer; the time is now!
  - b. the situation is urgent when your soul is in peril: 1 Tim. 4:2 and Titus 1:16

### C. Some Are Hardened By Personal Desires That Outweigh the Will of God

- 1. work is necessary
  - a. but is taking too many away from service to the Lord
  - b. do something about it
- 2. work at home is important, showing hospitality to company is important, school and homework are important: but not before the work of the Lord
  - a. put services ahead of them; put home Bible study ahead of them
  - b. put the Biblical education of your children ahead of them; put the business meeting ahead of them

### D. Some Are Deceived By a False Spirit of Inferiority By Worldly Standards

- 1. “Do not say, ‘Why were the former days better than these?’ for you do not inquire wisely concerning this” (Eccl. 7:10).
- 2. from outside, a lot of denominations may look more glorious and appealing than the Lord’s church
  - a. many boast 600 or more members, ornate and beautiful buildings
  - b. but inside, are they beautiful in God’s estimation?
  - c. are they worshiping in spirit and truth?
  - d. are they focused on spreading the gospel to glorify God in heaven?
  - e. this inferiority complex influences one to be embarrassed by his faith and to go on vacation
  - f. this feeling shows your focus to be on man’s standards instead of God’s
- 3. we are afraid of failure: afraid to even try

- a. do we forget that God is with us?: Rom. 8:31
- b. is there a fear to admit to being a Christian?
- c. is there a fear to broach the subject of Jesus with people?
- d. let your light shine

### III. A Soft Heart

#### A. The Non-Christian

1. finally break those earthly, fleshly bonds and slavery
2. stop putting God off until tomorrow: tomorrow is here but it is fleeting
3. confess Jesus and be baptized now

#### B. The Christian

1. take the cloak off your light and let it shine (think of others, even non-Christians, even strangers, before self)
2. renew your commitment to him: come today and ask for the prayers of your brethren
3. reform your daily habits: take that Bible out tomorrow and start reading, pray before you fall asleep tonight
4. come back at the next service: quit excusing yourself with weariness, it's too late or it's too early, it's not necessary

### **Conclusion**

You must realize that God has the power to save the obedient and punish the disobedient and choose which group you want to be eternally joined to. "Today, if you will hear his voice, harden not your hearts" but come to the Lord and be added to the saved or take the steps back to them.



# The Test of Christian Fellowship

by J.S. Smith • delivered 1 January 1995 • Austin, Texas

## Introduction

i. Fellowship is the most misunderstood word in the Bible, except for love, I suppose. A sister told me recently that she was saddened because there was no one in the local church for her to have fellowship with. What did she mean by that? What fellowship was she not having? Her idea of fellowship threw out the spiritual partnership in doing God's word for the physical frivolity of laughing and playing together. It is good to seek time to spend with your brethren away from the worship services but to limit the concept of fellowship to only this is ignorant of God's will and word.

ii. The beginning point for this discussion is John 17:20-21. Here Jesus predicted the relationship that his followers would have one to another: it would be like Jesus's relationship with God.

## Discussion

### I. Christian Fellowship Identified

#### A. What is Simple Fellowship?

1. fellowship n. (*American Heritage Dictionary*)

a. The condition of sharing similar interests, ideals, or experiences, as by reason of profession, religion, or nationality.

b. The companionship of individuals in a congenial atmosphere and on equal terms.

2. A close association of friends or equals sharing similar interests.

3. primarily fellowship in the secular definition is a participation in common

#### B. What is Christian Fellowship?

1. Thayer gives three definitions from Biblical context of *κοινωνία* (*koinonia*)

2. share which one has [or] participation in...the benefits of Christ's death, the body of Christ or the church...[and]in the dignity and blessings of the Son of God

3. intercourse, intimacy as the right hand as the sign and pledge of fellowship; used of the intimate bond which unites Christians; partakers of the same mind as God and Christ and of the blessing arising therefrom

4. benefaction, jointly contributed, a collection as exhibiting a proof of fellowship

#### C. Restricted by Text, Context and Definition to Members of Body: 2 Cor. 6:14-18

1. things included in fellowship according to this passage

a. yoking together of those in fellowship

b. a communion or sharing together

c. an accord or sense of agreement with one another

d. having a part with one another

e. agreement again

f. a dwelling together or abiding in the same place

g. walking together

h. a sentiment of receiving one another

i. being in the same family

2. this automatically eliminates the possibility of having Biblical fellowship with anyone outside of the body of Christ, His one church (Eph. 4:4 and 1:22-23; Col. 1:18)

a. we can not be yoked together with those who do not believe in Christ: Eph. 4:25

b. we can not share in common the blessings of knowing Christ if others refuse him

c. we do not agree on the most important thing in the world

d. we do not share in common our faith if the other person refuses to believe

e. we do not dwell with them because our citizenship is in heaven and theirs is in the world

f. we do not walk together with those outside Christ: "How can two walk together unless they be agreed" (Amos 3)?

g. we can only receive into our fellowship those whom Christ has first received

1. Christ receives those who come to him and submit to the gospel: 1 Peter 4:17

2. outsiders refuse to do this

h. they do not dwell with us in God's family because only the member of the body are children of God and brethren one to another: 1 John 3:1

## II. The Nature of Christian Fellowship In Christ's Prayer

### A. 1 Corinthians 1:10

1. what mind?; the mind of Christ: 1 Cor. 2:16
2. speak the same thing that there be no parties: 1 Peter 4:11
3. dwelling there leads to concord: Isa. 8:19-20 and John 15:10

### B. 2 Corinthians 13:11

1. add comfort to oneness of mind and peace
2. the sum is the presence of God

### C. Philippians 1:27, 2:1-2

1. this is conduct worthy of Christ's work
2. stand in one spirit with one mind working together
3. the cause is the consolation of Christ and the fellowship with the Spirit
4. you have oneness in work: Rom. 10:8-14 and Eph. 3:10
5. the result is that you will be like-minded with mutual love and accord

### D. 1 Peter 3:8-12

1. act brotherly
2. turn the other cheek and pursue peace
3. that your prayers may not be hindered

## III. The Test of Christian Fellowship

### A. Full Obedience to the Gospel

1. must first be in God's fellowship
2. to be in God's fellowship, you must have your sins washed away
  - a. God has no fellowship with darkness (Eph. 5:11 and 1 John 1:5)
  - b. to be in our fellowship, one must leave fellowship with the world by obedience to the gospel of Christ

Christ

3. then we have fellowship together: 1 John 1:6-7

### B. Abiding in the Gospel

1. no distinction from doctrine (all are will of God; all are binding)
2. we must live there: John 15:7-10 and 2 John 2:3-6
3. if not: 2 John 9 and Matt. 7:21-27

### C. Some Inside The Body Behave Like a Virus

1. they eschew all we have discussed here
2. there is a prescription
  - a. 2 Timothy 2:14-18
  - b. 2 Thess. 3:6, 14
  - c. Titus 3:10
  - d. Rom. 16:17

## Conclusion

This sermon was first preached a hundred years ago and it is just as powerful today. Let's understand fellowship as God gives it.

# Setting Good Aside

by J.S. Smith • delivered 1 January 1995 • Austin, Texas

## Introduction

i. Paul taught us in I Thessalonians 5 to test all things and having separated the good from the bad, to hold fast to that which is good. This lesson centers on some New Testament examples of good things not being properly examined and discerned and the fate of those good things to be foolishly despised by their recipients. Good things were being set aside.

## Discussion

I. "Let Not Him Who Does Despise Him Who Does Not"

A. The Context of Romans 14

1. there are two groups of people in the passage
    - a. both groups are equally Christians
    - b. one group comes from a background that causes them to be uneasy about certain liberties afforded by Christianity: the Jews
    - c. the other group does not have these personal qualms and is easily able to enjoy all the liberty of Christ: the Gentiles
  2. what was going on in Rome
    - a. with meat
    - b. the Gentiles looked down on the Jews who refused to eat meat
    - c. the Jews judged the liberated Gentiles as sinful for eating the meat
    - d. good, just people, living in no sin were setting aside like people over things that God held as indifferent
      1. "despise" from Greek, ἐξουθενεῖτω (*exoutheneito*): to make of no account, reject, cast aside, treat with contempt
      2. not brotherly and sure to spur division in the Roman church
    3. the solution was the word of God
      - a. of eating meats, etc., God had remained silent in the NT
      - b. no one here or in the future was going to stand before God in judgment and be condemned for eating a steak (unless he violated his own conscience in so doing)
      - c. Paul's command in regard to these matters of divine indifference: Rom. 14:1
        1. do not despise or judge either one (verse 3)
        2. do not judge or show contempt and resolve not to place a stumbling block in your brother's way
- Rom. 14:10-13

B. Does This Happen Today

1. many want to use Romans 14 to allow unity in diversity in the church of God
  - a. they use it to cover opposing doctrinal teachings
  - b. they use it to cover sin, as long as it is private and conscientious sin
2. Romans 14 though speaks only to matters of divine indifference
  - a. vegetarianism is not sinful
    1. the point in Rom. 14: the meat eater was not to despise the vegetarian (verse 3)
    2. is anybody seriously ready to contend that vegetarianism is a sin?
  - b. the observation of days in a way that does not place a trust for righteousness in them or a bind upon others to do likewise is not a sin: Acts 21:18-25
    1. were these elders sinning in their advice?
    2. was Paul sinning when he did it: Acts 21:26?
  - c. these Jews knew that these things were but customs and had no place in the church or as a bind upon those who lived differently
  - d. they held these things as traditions on their own
3. good people with different conscientious stands on things that are held indifferently by God should not be set at naught or rejected
4. this applies today to the covering, to card playing, to movies and to voting

## II. Quench Not The Spirit

### A. The Context of I Thessalonians 5:19-22

1. of course, this was written in the first century when miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit were still being exercised and granted

a. miraculous gifts were given to the apostles on Pentecost

b. they had the privilege of passing on some of those gifts to others as was necessary

1. an example of this process is given in Acts 8

a. the evangelist Philip was preaching in Samaria and many were becoming disciples

b. there was a need for more teaching in the area than he could provide but he was not able to pass along any of the gifts to another: Acts 8:14-18

c. it was the apostles who came for this purpose; Philip could not do it himself

2. this makes it apparent how rare Holy Spirit baptism was

a. the apostles received their gifts this way and those at Cornelius's house received one as well: both of these instances were considered extremely uncommon by all present and all who heard (Acts 1-2 and 10-11)

b. the apostles alone had the ability to pass on miraculous powers of the Holy Spirit and they did so as was necessary

c. but the apostles all died shortly after the New Testament was completed

d. these temporary gifts passed away with their need and with the hands who gave them (1 Cor. 13:8-10)

2. when Paul warns the Thessalonians not to quench the Spirit, it is evident that he has the miraculous power of preaching the will of God inerrantly in mind

a. 1 Cor. 14:1-5 describes this miraculous ability

1. it is the ability to speak exhortation, edification, and comfort that came miraculously from the Holy Spirit

2. note that this preaching (prophesying, because it is miraculous) was superior to speaking in tongues

b. Paul tells them not to put this fire out as it burned among them

1. it was to be kept burning by constant attention

2. quench from Greek,  $\sigmaβεννυτε$ : extinguish; suppress; stifle

3. they were to test what they were being taught to be sure that it came from the Spirit: if they found it to be true, they were to hold fast to it

### B. Is This Command Pertinent Today?

1. can we quench the Spirit today

2. the Spirit's miraculous work is done

a. the speaking in tongues

1. that was necessary in the first century when languages abounded and Biblical manuscripts were uncommon, translations even less common are no longer necessary

2. you can get a copy of the Bible in any language in our day

b. healing

1. done to provide proof that the men speaking of God were really sent by Him

2. read the Book: John 20:30-31

3. John wrote this near the end of the first century when gifts were passing away quickly: is it enough for you, John says it will have to be

c. prophesying

1. a knowledge of the will of God miraculously imparted to a person

2. we have all of the will of God that we need to serve him and live

3. but that doesn't answer the question, can we quench the spirit today

a. this prophesying is completed as is all the inspiration of the New Testament: God has breathed it all

b. the fire of the Spirit still burns through his word: John 16:5-14

1. it can never be extinguished but men try

2. the Spirit is quenched when study is neglected

3. when the gospel is not obeyed, even tonight

4. when the fruits of the spirit are few or none: Gal. 5:22-25
4. the Spirit is cast aside when we do this

### III. Let No One Despise You

#### A. The Context of Titus 2:11-15

1. worldly pleasures that men love but God hates were being preached against
2. there was a godly way of living and some would not accept it
3. this preacher had the difficult task of calling people on their sins
  - a. he was to speak the truth here and of God
  - b. he was to exhort and rebuke with all authority
    1. the authority of a preacher is often times resented by those who resist the truth or are offended by it
    2. he is despised when he gets on somebody's wrong side
      - a. despise from Greek, περιφρονειτω: to set oneself in thought above another; to exalt oneself ahead
      - b. the attitude of some when they are rebuked is to resent it and claim higher wisdom and knowledge
    3. often that attitude begins to spread as others find their pet sins condemned

#### B. The Context of 1 Timothy 4:12-16

1. Timothy was a young preacher like Titus charged with preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ, which is highly offensive to settled sinners (John 16)
2. he had to rebuke sinners in the church as well and many really don't like it
3. young preachers are often treated with less respect than they deserve
  - a. if they rebuke sin, some pass it off as lack of experience or wisdom
  - b. others say, I've been in the church forty years and I know better than you.
  - c. others just resent being reproved by one younger than they
4. despise here from Greek, καταφρονειτω: to think little or nothing of; disdain

#### C. The Danger

1. what matters should be the message, not the messenger
2. opponents want to raise and topple everything about the messenger but they don't want to touch what he has said with scripture
3. you can say what you want about me but you still have to deal with what I have said with scripture
4. often the problem is not with the preacher, you don't really despise the preacher, you despise the word of God, the problem is with God

### Conclusion

We should test all things and hold what is good. Too many times we carelessly set aside what is good.



# Given to the Lord

by J.S. Smith • delivered 8 January 1995 • Austin, Texas

## Introduction

- i. [Read 1 Samuel 1:2-5.]
- ii. There is not a single word in the Bible which does not have a great purpose behind it. We read in 1 Samuel 1 and 2 of the birth of Samuel. Of all the great men and women in the Bible, relatively few have their births so marvelously recorded for posterity. The account of Samuel's birth must have great lessons for the seeker of God and we will visit one of those precious lessons today. From Hannah, we learn the value of a prayerful life.

## Discussion

### I. Take it to the Lord

#### A. Anguish Arose in Hannah's Life: 1 Samuel 1:6-8

1. just about every woman feels a tremendous desire to bear children; some call it maternal instinct
  - a. it is a wonderful, useful desire that God has given especially to women
  - b. Hannah's desire to have a child whom she could love and give of herself to broke her heart when she was unable to conceive
    1. she was lucky to have such a good husband
    2. he wasn't bragging, only trying to comfort her in verse 8; (verse 5)
2. she wisely cast her great burden on the Lord: 1 Samuel 1:9-16
  - a. making vows like this was a common practice at this time
  - b. even in her anguish, the glory of God was central to her thinking
  - c. what better example is there of the way to handle depressing problems than here in the latter part of this passage?
    1. Hannah wasn't the type to drown her sorrows in a chemical haze
    2. she wasn't the type to be defeated and just give up; Hannah took it to the Lord
      - a. she said that a daughter of Belial, of wickedness, would do that
      - b. she was a daughter of Abraham and she depended upon God
3. even before God's answer, simply speaking with Him made her feel better: 1 Samuel 1:17-18

#### B. This Life is Filled With Anguish, Disappointment, and Sorrow

1. we have problems
  - a. problems at school: difficult tests, athletic disappointment, peer pressures
  - b. we suffer in college from endless hours in the library, low-paying jobs, tumultuous romances and the devil's temptations
  - c. we worry at home when the kids won't listen and our spouse is acting like something is wrong and the bills are piling up while the checking account is shrinking and the foundation is cracking
  - d. when we're young, we can't wait until we're old
  - e. when we get old, we mourn the loss of the days of youth
  - f. some are real; others imagined and exacerbated by constant concentration
2. we must cast our burden upon the Lord; Psalm 55:16-18 and 22 and Matthew 11:28-30
3. simply bearing our souls to God as Hannah did will make you feel better
  - a. talking about problems almost always makes us feel better
  - b. who better to talk to than your Father?
  - c. God will sustain you
  - d. you may not see your prayer answered the way you want or in your time frame, but you will know that God is watching over you

### II. God Hears The Righteous and The Faithful

#### A. Hannah Was Definitely That: 1 Samuel 1:19-20

1. her prayer was answered and the answer was as Hannah wished
2. Bible says the Lord remembered her: he was listening to the godly woman!

#### B. God Will Hear Our Prayers As Well: Psalm 34:11-18

1. "Now we know that God does not hear sinners; but if anyone is a worshiper of God and does His will, He hears him" (John 9:31).
2. James 1:2-8

### III. The Grateful Remember Their Covenant With God

#### A. Hannah Did: 1 Samuel 1:21-28

1. she showed gratitude through every fiber of her being
2. she was beaming with joy and thanks to the Giver of this gift
3. Hannah did not covet this gift from God, though
  - a. she did as she had promised God
  - b. more good advice from her husband (verse 23)
  - c. Eli shared in joyous experience; there when she took sorrow to God
  - d. she followed through as she had said and with joy: 1 Samuel 2:1-10

#### B. Just As Hannah Did, So Do We: 1 Peter 1:6-9

1. joy inexpressible is a familiar thought to me
2. the Ethiopian Eunuch went on his way rejoicing (Acts 8:39) after his baptism
3. we don't forget God after he blesses us
  1. baptism is a promise of a life of service to God as He has made promises of eternal blessing to us
  2. we don't ever step away from that promise to God
  - b. we are dedicated to God as Hannah was: each day and each minute

### **Conclusion**

# Amazing Grace

by J.S. Smith • delivered 8 January 1995 • Austin, Texas

## Introduction

i . Paul tells us something very important in Ephesians 2:8-10. The hearts and minds of every man and woman in the world ought to bow in humble gratitude for the grace of God all day every day. Truly we are undeserving of his grace, yet he grants it to us anyway.

## Discussion

### I. What Is Grace?

#### A. On The Part of the Giver

1. “on the part of the bestower, the friendly disposition from which the kindly act proceeds” (W.E. Vine)
2. the joy God has in providing his gift

#### B. On The Part of the Receiver

1. “on the part of the receiver, a sense of the favor bestowed, a feeling of gratitude” (W.E. Vine)
2. the one who accepts God’s grace feels genuinely blessed to receive something as a gift from God

#### C. Summary

1. Thayer adds that the New Testament writers use  $\chi\alpha\rho\iota\varsigma$  “of that kindness by which God bestows favors even upon the ill-deserving, and grants to sinners the pardon of their offenses, and bids them accept of eternal salvation through Christ.”

2. there is a giver and a receiver of the grace
  - a. the grace of God is his gift of pardon and eternal salvation to those who do not deserve it because of their sins
  - b. the receiver must accept the gift through a sense of gratitude
  - c. the old pencil in the debate example

### II. Why Do We Need God’s Grace?

#### A. We Have Sinned

1. we have all sinned and fallen short of his will for us: Rom. 3:21-23
2. the result of our sin should be our eternal death but God has given us the gift of eternal life through Jesus: Rom. 6:23

#### B. There is Nothing Man Can Do to Pay The Debt of His Transgressions to God: Eph. 2:8-10

1. the nicest, most generous and moral person in this world is yet a sinner and carries a debt to God that he is totally unable to pay
2. you may make a list of all the wonderful things you do and yet still the other side of the ledger will contain trespasses against God’s will
3. it is only through God’s wonderful grace that the sin column might be zeroed out: 1 Peter 1:17-19
4. the example of Cornelius, an upright man: Acts 10:1-2
  - a. still unjustified, unsaved sinner at this point
  - b. until he heard words by which he was saved (Acts 11:14) and that led to repentance to life from God’s grace (verse 18)

#### C. God Desires That All Be Saved: 1 Timothy 2:3-6 and 2 Peter 3:9

1. men must come to a knowledge of the truth
2. there is only one mediator between God and man who can bring man back to God: Jesus
3. God exercises patience upon alien sinners by permitting them time to accept his grace
4. instead of perishing, he desires that each man repent: Rom. 3:21-26
  - a. that offer is made to every soul in the world for all sin
  - b. it requires belief, faith in Jesus and trust in him

### III. How Does "Grace" Work?

- A. It Was Extended By God as a Gift: Eph. 2:8 and Rom. 5:8-10
  - 1. salvation by grace was extended as a gift by God
  - 2. it took the form of an offering on our behalf to atone for our sins
  - 3. the offering was God's own perfect Son, crucified upon a cross
  
- B. It Must Be Received by Man as a Gift
  - 1. it is not earned by works of the law of Moses: Rom. 3:28
  - 2. it is evident that the gift is not received simply by virtue of the fact that it is offered
    - a. we have already seen some conditions God placed upon receiving His grace
    - b. Rom. 3:21 and 26 required that a man believe in Jesus and place faith in him to receive the gift of God
      - 1. the Bible tells us where faith comes from
      - 2. Faith comes by hearing the word of God (Rom. 10:17)
      - 3. so man must hear the gospel message in order to have the necessary faith in Jesus
    - c. 2 Peter 3:9 required that man repent of his sins to accept the gift
      - 1. upon hearing the gospel, a man must decide to change his life to pattern it after Jesus's teachings
      - 2. accepting the gift requires man do something
    - d. is there anything else?
      - 1. attached to that faith is some confession of it: Rom. 10:8-13
      - 2. Jesus also commanded baptism in accepting the gift: Mark 16:15-16
      - 3. Peter preached the same message: Acts 2:38
        - a. he said you must repent
        - b. and you must be baptized to receive the gift of God
  - 3. God's grace is not earned because it can not be earned
    - a. there is nothing we can do that could buy our souls back
    - b. God has provided the offering
    - c. not all accept the gift, though
      - 1. in order to receive a present from my wife, I have to reach out my hands and accept it
      - 2. in order to receive a gift from God, I have to believe the gift is valuable and then reach out for it as God has commanded: through repentance, confession and baptism

### **Conclusion**

Will you reach out your hands today and accept the gift of God: Rom. 6:17-23?

# To The Elect Lady (Second John)

by J.S. Smith • delivered 15 January 1995 • Austin, Texas

## Introduction

i. The shortest book in the Bible is the tiny epistle of Second John. But this letter holds special insight for us. 2 John was written at the very end of the first century A.D. It was the most monumental span of time since God created the heavens and the earth. The Father had sent his only son into the world and he had perished upon a cross only to rise again in victory over death signifying the invitation to all men to approach the matchless throne of grace. Jesus had promised to establish his church and he had done so successfully. The first century had been a tumultuous and trying one for those who confessed Christ. They were persecuted at every turn and many fell away from the faith. Nevertheless, Christ's church stood. John writes here as apparently the only living apostle and gives yet more preparation for the church to remain in truth.

## Discussion

### I. In Truth: 2 John 1-3

#### A. Jesus Is Truth

1. as Jesus stood before Pilate, truth was being lifted onto a pedestal in the world where it would remain until the judgment

a. truth was being elevated to a position of majesty

b. it was attainable to one who diligently sought it: John 18:33-38

1. Jesus was born to bear witness to the truth and issue God's invitation to repentance and forgiveness (John 1:14)

2. it was they who hear his voice that are of the truth

2. these early disciples had heard his voice, were of the truth: John 14:1-6

a. they were so intent upon following Jesus, they possessed faith to follow him even to a location they did not know

b. doubtless Thomas begged for instruction, how may we follow you, Lord?

c. Jesus replies that the Father is approached only through the Son

1. you come through believing in me (a preparation for the post-resurrection)

2. you come by walking in my word: John 8:27-32

#### B. Truth Is The Basis For Fellowship

1. John's special love for the elect lady centers around his appreciation of the fact that she and her children are walking in truth as Jesus had told John they must

2. the love of these other brethren (verse 1) is occasioned by the same sentiment of accord

a. the life disciplined by truth is glorious in God's eyes

b. realizing that, brethren are overjoyed when they sense accord with brethren elsewhere who are walking in the truth of Jesus

1. I feel that when I travel to meetings in towns near and far

2. I feel that when I receive letters from brothers and sisters around the country

3. this sense is more than one of "we're not alone in the world after all"

4. it is one of satisfaction in the fact that "God is glorified in the world after all."

3. the faith of these Christians had shone to many

a. theirs was a faith that could not be contained: 1 Thess. 1:6-8

b. with both these examples, it wasn't so much that they were thinking, "I need to spread the truth;" they just couldn't help it, they were bursting at the seams

### II. This Is Love: 2 John 4-6

#### A. That We Walk According To His Commandments

1. there is a danger in polarizing oneself to one aspect of the New Testament of Jesus Christ or another

a. some think of the gospel as nothing more than a Col. d, lifeless rule book and they work to obey the rules, sometimes grudgingly, like they work to obey the laws of the state

b. while others think of the gospel simply as a set of internal feelings with good teachings

included but not nearly as important as feeling good inside

2. in fact pleasing God demands that we reconcile obedience with feeling good

a. John said, “this is love that we walk according to His commandments”

b. he knew what he was talking about: Jesus told him and the other apostles, “If you love me, keep my commandments” (John 14:15)

c. that sought after “good feeling” ought to be predicated by a sense that you are learning God’s will and are glorifying him in your devotion to it (Eph. 5:17)

B. More Than Burnt Offerings and Sacrifices: Mark 12:28-34

1. the scribe was impressed with Jesus and desired more knowledge

2. Jesus described the first and second commandments and proclaimed that there was none greater than these for “on these two commandments hang all the Law and Prophets” (Matt. 22:40).

a. here is the total devotion to God that is more than just a legalistic, salvation by works pursuit of God

b. here is a heart-deep commitment that brings joy to a man’s soul because he is dedicated to glorifying God in his own vessel

c. Jesus teaches us that hatred, grudging and malice are acts of disobedience to the truth

d. not only to a brother, as James and John teach so vividly, but to a neighbor or even an enemy ( Matt. 5:43-48)

III. Look To Yourselves

A. Transition

1. having taken note of all this

2. realizing the great blessing it is and will be in the age to come; don’t lose it

B. Some Desire To Rob You: 2 John 7-11

1. there are many false teachers in the world

a. the example here, in John’s era, was the Gnostics who tried to infiltrate the minds of Christians in the guise of a doctrine that purported to be harmonious with the Truth

b. Gnostics claimed superior spiritual wisdom

c. they asserted that all material substance is evil, even the physical body which meant that Jesus could not have come in the flesh to die for our sins: 1 John 3:24-4:3

2. there were many other false teachers in the first century with a myriad of spurious doctrines

3. they were all to be rejected when tested and proven false

C. Three Sin Here

1. the one who goes beyond the word of God in his teaching or practice

a. he goes beyond truth to opinion and “think-so”

b. he guesses where he could be assured in truth

2. the one who takes false doctrine with him and tries to spread it

a. he wages war with the work of Christ and tries to add to his own following

b. he is a thief

3. the one who receives him and facilitates him in any way

a. he facilitates the devil

b. he has fellowship in falsehood and deceit and danger

D. Be Vigilant!

1. look to yourselves (a personal responsibility to be on guard): 1 Peter 5:8-11

2. don’t give up the life that glorifies God in favor of one that just feels good

## Conclusion

There is great joy to be had in being a disciple of Jesus Christ if we will focus on His truth, walk in John’s divinely inspired definition of love and remain ever vigilant.

# Broad Phylacteries

by J.S. Smith • delivered 15 January 1995 • Austin, Texas

## Introduction

i. In the last few years, when people have found that I am a preacher, they sometimes try to call me Reverend or Pastor, supposing that they are giving me a proper amount of honor. I am always quick to correct them, with love, and tell them that I do not qualify for either of these titles. I have occasionally found it a good starting point in Bible study. Today, we will talk about religious titles in the world.

## Discussion

### I. The Pursuit of Preeminence

#### A. Bible Examples

##### 1. Diotrephes: 12 John 9-11

a. Diotrephes was hungry for power and sought to eliminate the possibility that anyone would appear superior to him in the local church, even an apostle

b. he went to great lengths to lift himself up on the backs of others

##### 2. the scribes and Pharisees: Luke 20:45-47 and Matthew 23:1-7

a. they were the spiritual guides of the people and the words they spoke from scripture were to be obeyed

b. but they had proven themselves to be utterly hypocritical, so their example was not to be followed

1. they teach Mosaic binds that they themselves do not keep

2. they do good works only to gain the praise of men

3. they began a custom of copying parts of the OT onto parchment and carrying the copy in a charm worn on their bodies where all could see

a. these phylacteries worn by the Pharisees were made larger than everyone else

b. they imagined that others would see their broader phylacteries and be impressed with their piety

c. they did likewise with their garment borders, fringed to distinguish Jews from other nations, but enlarged by the Pharisees to impress men again

4. they coveted seats of distinction, at the head of the dinner table or in the presiding officers's chair on a council

5. they were pleased by special attention they received in the marketplace from the "common folk" who swooned at their pious robes

a. they loved to be called, "Rabbi"

b. this word signifies, "great"

1. they hoped anxiously to be noticed for their teaching ability by the inferior audiences

2. they were insulted when they were not so noted

#### B. Jesus Despised This Prideful Pursuit of Preeminence

1. do not be called Great Teacher or father or Leader: Matt. 23:8-10

2. Jesus taught that all were members of the body and the pursuit of preeminence would lead to downfall: Matthew 23:1-12

#### C. His Teaching Sunk In

1. Acts 10:24-26

2. Acts 14:8-18

### II. Why Am I Not Called..

#### A. Reverend?

1. this word is used once in the Bible: Psalm 111:9-10 (KJV)

a. it literally means a state of "be[ing] afraid, stand[ing] in awe, fear" (Vine)

b. when a man attaches *Reverend* to himself, he puts himself in God's exclusive position of spiritual fear or respect

c. he violates Matthew 23 by setting himself up above others as one to be feared, just like the Pharisee did

2. the Old Testament uses various Hebrew words to denote this type of respect but it simply does not belong to any man

#### B. Pastor?

1. used only once in the New Testament: Eph. 4:11

2. from the Greek word, ποιμην (*poimen*) for “herdsman, esp. a shepherd” (Thayer)

a. we look elsewhere to discover a description of the work of pastors, or shepherds in the church

b. Acts 20:28-29

1. Paul was speaking to the elders of the Ephesian church (verse 17)

a. he describes their role as shepherding, the very definition of pastor

b. there is no other role in the church that even comes close to this description

c. by studying the whole bible, we discover that *pastor* and *elder* are synonymous terms, as is *overseer* (verse 28)

d. we find that there is a plurality of pastors in a local church and from Acts 14:23, we learn that they were appointed to the position and not simply given it based upon their age

2. Paul taught again on overseers in 1 Timothy 3, giving the qualifications

a. here we learn that another synonymous term is bishop (*episkopos*), the noun in both Acts 20:28 and here

b. we learn here the qualifications for this office

3. with all this taken into account, it becomes obvious why I am not called pastor, I am not qualified according to the scriptures, nor have I been appointed to the work

a. a preacher may be an elder or pastor but he is not necessarily one

b. he is one only if qualified and appointed

#### C. Father?

1. direct prohibition in Matthew 23:8

a. Jesus despised the Pharisaical attitude of seeking to be preeminent over brethren by distinguishing oneself in symbolic robes and actions and titles

b. this is not a prohibition of honoring one’s fleshly father; it is a prohibition of demanding or accepting honor as a spiritual guide or leader

2. the priesthood in New Testament times is not based upon genealogy or pride: 1 Peter 2:9-10

a. are you a Christian?

b. then you are a priest in Jesus’s service

c. the New Testament says all disciples are priests; those who claim to hold some partisan exclusivity to the role are lifting themselves up on the backs of others

#### Conclusion

When men accept the titles of Reverend or Father, they usurp authority that belongs only to God. When they accept the title, pastor, they should make certain they are qualified and appointed and engaged in the work of a pastor.

# The Mountain of the Lord

by J.S. Smith • delivered 22 January 1995 • Austin, Texas

## Introduction

i. The prophets Isaiah and Micah worked and wrote contemporaneously. The opening verse of Isaiah 2 and Micah 4 are nearly identical but it is Micah, the less celebrated of the two, who elaborates upon the particular prophecy of the Mountain of the Lord.

ii. We will study the prophecy of Micah 4 today in light of what the inspired writers of the New Testament said of its fulfillment. These inspired writers were qualified to explain prophetic fulfillment: 1 Peter 1:10-12 and 1 Cor. 2:7-13. Peter's sermon beginning with an explanation of the fulfillment of Joel's prophecy is a prime example.

iii. [Read Micah 4:1-8.]

## Discussion

### I. The Time of Fulfillment

#### A. The Beginning of the Gospel Age: Micah 4:1-2

1. Christ identified this basic prophecy from Micah as an indication that the gospel age was beginning: Luke 24:45-47

2. Jesus says, "Thus it is written..." pointing to this very passage we study

3. he tells the apostles to wait in Jerusalem for the Helper because it was prophesied that the gospel would go forth from Jerusalem; not some other place: Luke 24:48-53

#### B. "The Last Days"

1. this phrase and ones like it are used by prophetic writers to refer to the end of the Jewish dispensation and the beginning of a new order

2. Peter determines the time of "the last days" for us: Joel 2:28-32

a. the events in Acts: the apostles had waited in Jerusalem for the Helper and he had arrived this day

1. He was poured out on the apostles who gained the supernatural ability to speak in various foreign tongues

2. this had amazed the others who watched and suspected them of drunkenness

3. it was a monumental event which sent Peter's mind back 800 years to the words of an ancient prophet

a. Peter says, "This is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: 'And it shall come to pass in the last days...'"

b. there can be no doubt that inspired Peter recognized this day, Pentecost, as a landmark in the last days

1. it was the end of the Mosaic law and the effecting of the law of faith, the law of Christ

2. it was the beginning of preaching the gospel to the whole world

3. the Hebrew writer finds himself in the last days of Judaism as well: Heb. 1:1-2

#### C. Summary of "The Last Days"

1. immediate idea you may get when you hear this phrase is end of the world

2. context of the prophecy and the apostle's acknowledgement of its fulfillment place the time of these last days as Judaism was growing obsolete and the law of Christ was taking effect (Heb. 8:13)

### II. The New Kingdom of Prophecy

#### A. Establishment

1. the kingdom would be referred to as the Lord's House; the church was so identified: 1 Tim. 3:15 and Hebrews 12:22-23

2. it would be established first in Jerusalem; Jesus told the apostles to tarry in Jerusalem and await the Helper so that this would be fulfilled

3. we have already seen that they did wait there in Jerusalem, the Helper did come, and in Acts 2:41-47, we find the church born and growing

3. the kingdom would be established in "the last days"

- a. Peter referred to his era as the last days, as did the Hebrew writer
- b. it was in this era that Christ's church was founded
- 4. the kingdom would grow by means of a divine message
  - a. Jesus commanded his apostles to "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15).
  - b. those who obeyed the gospel, its commands to repentance and baptism, were added to the church (the kingdom) daily (Acts 2:41-47)
  - c. the kingdom grows by means of this divine message: the gospel

#### B. Citizenship In This Prophetic Kingdom

- 1. not based upon race, ethnicity, culture, genealogy, gender; Ephesians 2:11-18 shows that both Gentile and Jew were welcome
- 2. citizenship was to be based solely upon obedience to that divine message
  - a. Jesus commanded his apostles to take the gospel to every creature in the whole world: Acts 1:8
  - b. the apostles succeeded in taking the message to all the known world: Acts 13:46-48
  - c. Jesus said that the end of these last days would come when the gospel had been so spread: Matthew 24:14
    - 1. by 70 A.D., the gospel had done this: Rom. 1:21-23
    - 2. Jesus's prediction of the destruction of the temple by the Romans in Matthew 24 was fulfilled and Judaism was decimated
  - 3. it was a place of spiritual guidance for those who voluntarily entered; Hebrews 8:10-12 shows the church to be this kingdom (John 6:44-45)

#### C. A Kingdom of Peace

- 1. this era of peace began in those same last days when nations still mad war with each other
- 2. but this new nation would be a spiritual kingdom and would not make war
  - a. it was in the time when Jesus predicted there would be wars and rumors of war foretelling the destruction of Jerusalem in the last days (Matthew 24:6)
  - b. thus this is not a time of universal peace and indeed it was anything but
  - c. the peaceful citizens in Christ's kingdom would walk in his paths and beat their swords into plowshares as God's holy nation (1 Peter 2:9)
  - d. Christ's kingdom is not carnal and warring, but spiritual, peaceful: John 18:36 and 2 Cor. 10:3-4
- 3. this kingdom was one of safety and security as well
  - a. its citizens were of a heavenly country (Phil. 3:20)
  - b. none could cast them out of this nation as the Babylonians would soon do to the Judeans of Micah's era
    - c. a kingdom, the Hebrew writer says, "which cannot be shaken" (Heb. 12:28).

#### D. The Gathering of the Meek and Lowly

- 1. in the same period we have identified from Peter and the rest of the New Testament writers
- 2. it refers to the spiritually lame and scattered who would find strength under Christ's reign in his kingdom, the church: Luke 4:18-19 and John 11:51-52

### Conclusion

Micah speaks of the Mountain of the Lord and we are reminded of Daniel who also prophesied of an invincible kingdom of the saints. Both speak of the church which was established in the last days of Judaism before the destruction of the temple. It is this kingdom that the King invites you to become a citizen of today.

# Joseph Refused

by J.S. Smith • delivered 22 January 1995 • Austin, Texas

## Introduction

i. Adultery is a subject we don't seem to discuss enough and that is a shame because it is a real weakness in our society today.

## Discussion

### I. The Woman Caught in Adultery

#### A. Why This Test: John 8:1-8

1. the scribes and Pharisees had identified Jesus as a threat to their position and authority in Israel
2. they had then set about trying to discredit Him before the Jews by testing him with various hypothetical situations and hypocritical appeals to Moses
3. they brought this woman before him, though, and took it a step further
  - a. this was more than a hypothetical situation
  - b. it was not necessary that they bring this woman before Jesus to try her
    1. by so doing, they were trying to place Jesus in a no-win situation
    2. the conspirators reasoned that Jesus could not set aside Moses and clear the obviously guilty woman without forfeiting the confidence and favor of the people who believed Him to be the Messiah
    3. they thought that he would therefore be compelled to condemn the woman to the scriptural punishment of death
    4. by condemning her, he would be usurping the authority of the Roman rulers who governed Judea in Jesus's day and he would be himself condemned and possibly imprisoned for this
  - c. it was an ingenious plan and most people would have made one mistake or the other, but this truly was the son of God they were testing

#### B. Jesus Confounds Them: John 8:7-9

1. he made it clear that he had no interest in passing judgment upon this woman at this time
  - a. it was clear to all that he did not relish the position they were trying to put him in
  - b. he was not trying to establish himself as a Roman magistrate at all
2. his solution is so calm and reasoned and perfect
  - a. indeed she was guilty
  - b. there were witnesses to her crime
  - c. according to the law, it was the witnesses who would cast the first stones
  - d. Jesus said if any of you are without transgression of the law against adultery, then you are righteous to judge and execute
3. Jesus looked down and wrote in the dirt again
  - a. while he looked away, the accusers one by one disappeared
  - b. they were convicted by their consciences as Jesus had judged his tormentors well: adultery was no stranger to their consciences
  - c. from the oldest to the least, all were convicted and judged themselves unfit to accuse her anymore of a crime they themselves knew all too well

#### C. Jesus Does Not Condemn Her, But...: John 8:10-12

1. facetiously, Jesus asks the woman where her accusers have gone, was no one righteous enough to condemn you?
2. no one was and Jesus said, neither do I
  - a. for a different reason, he was righteous and sinless
  - b. Jesus did not come as an earthly judge in the tradition of Gideon and Deborah nor did he come as an earthly king in the tradition of David and Saul
  - c. Jesus did not come to condemn people to physical death but to save them from spiritual death
  - d. passing civil judgment as the scribes and Pharisees wished to see him do was not his office and he did not try to take it by condemning her to die
3. she did not ask him for forgiveness of her sins and he did not grant it to her by his words
  - a. he did leave her with one command

- b. "Go and sin no more."
- c. Jesus recognized her adultery as sin and told her that she had better so recognize it as well and avoid it
- 4. Jesus's statement in verse 12 drove an eternal distinction between his true disciples and those of the devil
  - a. it was up to this woman which side she would come down on
  - b. she had been on the wrong side but it was not too late to change

## II. Jesus Taught On Adultery

### A. Adultery Begins in the Heart: Matthew 5:27-28

- 1. it had been taught from Moses through the scribes and Pharisees that adultery was not to be committed
- 2. Jesus said there is more to godliness than avoiding the outward act
- 3. he said that the heart must be as obedient as the body
- 4. one who looks upon a woman to lust has already committed the act of adultery in his heart and mind
  - a. his heart should belong to the Lord and to his wife if married
  - b. he has made his heart a harlot with another woman by lusting after her

### B. Take Great Caution: Matthew 5:29-30

- 1. Jesus does not teach us literally to perform surgery on our bodies but rather to do all that we can to avoid falling to sin
  - a. literally plucking out an eye would not eliminate the possibility of lust
    - 1. other senses are used in seduction as well
    - 2. but a man can exercise more than a little control over what his eyes are allowed to view
  - b. cutting off one's hand would not prevent lust or adultery
    - 1. but disciplining oneself and keeping oneself from temptation will help
    - 2. such is Jesus's advice and command
- 2. Jesus warns that the best way to avoid falling into sin is to keep the temptation as far away as possible
  - a. adultery is a great temptation to many, especially as Jesus notes that lust is adultery of the heart
  - b. this is a common temptation: keep its seductive influence far from you
    - 1. television shows like soap operas, dance shows and daytime talk shows
    - 2. R-rated movies
    - 3. magazines and trashy romance novels
    - 4. the beach, pool or water park
    - 5. dances

## III. So Walk Wisely

### A. Not Like David: 2 Samuel 11:1-4

- 1. even in Bible times, this seemed to be a special problem in the spring
- 2. Jesus would say that David made his first mistake by committing adultery in his heart with Bathsheba
  - a. it was an accident that he saw her bathing
  - b. but he didn't have to fall because of her temptation
  - c. he should have looked away and done all that he could to put her from his mind and ensure that the accident didn't repeat itself
  - d. he knew who she was and that she was married but he did little or nothing to resist the temptation
- 3. David did not exercise his ability to cast the temptation out of his mind like a bad eye or offensive hand; he instead nurtured the temptation and fulfilled it
  - a. often we can't help when a temptation presents itself
  - b. but we can prevent our failure
    - 1. don't go where temptation is certain

2. avert your eyes when it appears anyway
  3. rebuke it if you have to
  4. take it seriously and never pretend that you are somehow immune
  5. treat it like a snake that may bite you and if it does may kill you
4. hear the Proverb writer: Proverbs 7:6-9, 21-23, 24-27

**B. But Like Joseph in Egypt: Genesis 39:1-12**

1. Joseph was loyal to God and his fellow man and refused to betray them
2. Joseph resisted the temptation day after day and rebuked the seductress
3. when the temptation became so great, he fled from it
  - a. there is no shame in departing from a situation in which your faith is tested to disobey God
  - b. Joseph glorified God that day when he ran out of the room
  - c. he won and the devil lost

**Conclusion**

Be on guard!



# The Courtship of Ruth and Boaz

by J.S. Smith • delivered 1 January 1995 • Austin, Texas

## Introduction

i. The courtship of Ruth and Boaz is a short story that holds a number of important examples that would benefit one who studied it with the intent of being instructed further. This is so much more than a love story: it is a story of blessing for those who seek refuge under the wings of God.

## Discussion

### I. Care For The Lowly

#### A. Ruth for Naomi

1. Naomi's husband died and left her the mother of two sons and their wives
  - a. ten years later, Naomi's sons died, leaving behind now three widows, one old and two young
  - b. Naomi was an Israelite and she decided to return to Israel to seek God's blessing
    1. she told the two young widows who were not Israelites, but natives of Moab, to stay in their land with their people and to do so with an innocent heart, for they had helped her
    2. both widows, Ruth and Orpah, desired to stay with Naomi and move to Israel
      - a. Naomi reasoned with them, convincing Orpah to remain in Moab: Ruth 1:14-18
      - b. she left the only country she had ever known and the god her people created and venerated
      - c. she vowed to remain by Naomi's side until death parted them
      - d. the thought of her dear mother-in-law living alone and in need was unbearable
2. Ruth immediately went to work to provide for her and her mother-in-law: Ruth 2:2, Ruth 2:5-7

#### B. Boaz for Ruth and Naomi

1. Boaz immediately cared for this young woman
2. he besought Ruth to allow him to help her: Ruth 2:8-10
  - a. he provided physical protection from other men
  - b. he gave her a place to earn the essentials to life
3. Ruth wondered why he was being so chivalrous: Ruth 2:11-12
  - a. her example of caring for another led him to appreciate and repeat it
  - b. she had sought refuge under the wing of God

#### C. God For All

1. for Ruth and Naomi through the hands of Boaz: Ruth 2:14-20
2. in providing for Ruth's security
  - a. Boaz was more than a generous benefactor, he was a distant relative who could provide for Ruth a wonderful future: Ruth 3:1-2, 8-13
  - b. he presented the situation to the one with the option: Ruth 4:1-8
    1. it is fair to say that Boaz was hoping it would work out this way
    2. his prayer was answered: Ruth 2:12

#### D. Pure And undefiled Religion

1. care of widows and orphans has always been of extreme importance to God
  - a. He always looks upon the weak and lowly with empathy and concern
  - b. the Scriptures seek to elevate them in the eyes of others with means to assist them: James 1:27
2. God places that responsibility first upon the family of the widow or orphan
  - a. not first upon the state, awaiting welfare, Medicaid, state-operated orphanages and rest homes
  - b. not first upon the individual brethren
  - c. not first upon the church, Collectively: 1 Tim. 5:3-4, 8, 16
  - e. the problem with tax money paying for welfare, Medicaid and orphanages is that it takes money out of individual's pockets who might have been able to use it to provide for his family
  - f. when such a large sum is taken away by the state, it makes it all the more difficult to fulfill family responsibilities like these

## II. Virtuous Widowhood

### A. Ruth Grasps Responsibilities (Ruth 1-2)

1. although her husband was dead and there was no blood connecting her to Naomi, Ruth still felt a responsibility to her mother-in-law
2. she recognized a responsibility to God
3. she saw her responsibility as a young woman to aid her older mother-in-law and she heeded her words as if she were her mother

### B. Ruth Was Sober and Mature

1. she did not hold out her hand but worked to support herself
2. she did not run after young men, rich or poor
3. her virtue was known throughout the town

### C. Ruth Is An Example of Living As A Godly Widow

1. shortcomings of wanton widows (1 Tim. 5:13-14)
  - a. idle, gossips and busybodies
  - b. Paul demands the younger marry so that the devil is not given opportunity to steal them away
2. qualities of a godly widow: 1 Tim. 5:5, 9-10
  - a. a widow should devote herself to God in prayer and trust
  - b. her life is not an example to others of seeking pleasure and merriment, but sobriety and respect
  - c. her good works form her reputation among all
  - d. she is a servant of strangers, the saints, and the afflicted

## III. Godliness Is Profitable

### A. What Ruth Did

1. she left the false god of her home for the God of another country, the true
2. she sacrificed her freedom and herself for Naomi
3. she labored hard in the field that Naomi and she might live and not be a burden to others

### B. What Boaz Did

1. saw to the physical, bodily protection of Ruth; provided for the widow's needs
2. noticed her virtue and praised her for it

### C. These Godly People Were Rewarded

1. physically
  - a. Ruth found a true home and family because she fulfilled a responsibility to her mother-in-law and looked mercifully on her affliction
  - b. Ruth's work was eased by Boaz because she showed so much heart and diligence in what she was doing and why
  - c. Boaz found a remarkable woman in Ruth because he desired to show mercy to the meek
2. spiritually
  - a. Ruth found the true God because she sought honor and righteousness
  - b. Boaz found opportunity to show godliness because he recognized the chances before him and did not ignore them

### D. There Is Great Reward: 1 Tim. 4:8

1. physically: Matt. 6:25-33
2. He "...is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think" (Eph. 3:20)
3. spiritually in that He is a rock of refuge: Psalm 142

## Conclusion

Godliness is so profitable. Through it, we learn to know a God who is good. Our minds are saved from the tortures of unbelief and skepticism. We find a friend upon whom we may cast our burdens. We find salvation by obedient faith.

# Now Abide These Three (A Sermon in Scripture and Song)

by J.S. Smith • delivered 29 January 1995 • Austin, Texas

This evening's song leader is \_\_\_\_\_ .

## *Opening*

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-----  
Announcements  
Opening Prayer

## *Meditate Upon Faith*

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Reading Hebrews 11:1-6  
Song #423 'Tis So Sweet To Trust in Jesus  
Song #167 We Saw Thee Not  
Song #182 I Believe In Mount Calvary

## *Meditate Upon Hope*

-----  
Reading Psalm 78:5-7  
Song #109 Higher Ground  
Song #361 In His Time  
Song #457 The Last Mile of the Way

-----  
Middle Prayer

## *Meditate Upon Love*

-----  
Reading 1 Corinthians 13:1-8, 13  
Song #528 No One Ever Cared For Me Like Jesus  
Song #553 Love Lifted Me  
Song #526 Sweeter As The Years Go By

## *Meditate Upon The Lord's Invitation*

-----  
Invitation: Now Abide These Three  
Song #270 Give Me Thy Heart

## *Communion and Closing*

-----  
-----  
Serving of the Lord's Supper  
Closing Prayer

-----  
Songs selected from *Hymns For Worship* by Shepard and Stevens

## **Introduction During Announcements**

i. Indeed, faith, hope and love abide now, but the greatest of these is love. God defines love very differently from the world, and allows that love is often expressed as much by reproof as exhortation. Loving a child means disciplining him and loving a brother or sister in Christ can sometimes require the same sort of sacrifice and selflessness.

ii. In tonight's lesson, we will study about faith, hope and love, stopping to reflect upon each in scripture and song.

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## **The Lord's Invitation**

**Text:** 1 Corinthians 13

We have sung tonight of these three great attributes that God desires man to attain and cultivate. Paul concludes the great thirteenth chapter of 1 Corinthians by explaining that while all three now exist, the greatest of these is love.

In the day of judgment, faith will be swallowed up by sight and hope will be realized by fruition but love will not change in the least. It was the love of God that authored the faith and gave the hope and it was the love for God that led a man to proclaim faith and hold hope.

We know that God is love and he is a rewarder of those who diligently seek him. If you believe that Jesus is the son of God and desire a hope for eternity, won't you accept his love and proclaim yours for him in obedience to his will tonight?

# Trust in the Lord (Proverbs 3)

by J.S. Smith • delivered 5 February 1995 • Austin, Texas

## Introduction

i. I have been doing a lot of reading in the proverbs lately and I am daily amazed at the wisdom contained there in. What a neglected mine of brilliance and guidance we have within our grasp. The chapter puts us in mind of the parable of the prodigal son which Jesus related in Luke 15. Jesus shows us what happens when one does not heed the admonitions of Proverbs 3.

ii. [Read Luke 15:11-24.]

## Discussion

### I. The Law of God

#### A. Proverbs 3:1-2

1. do not forget my law

a. the instruction here is for one who knows the law

b. he is not ignorant or a stranger

c. the command is to not forget it

2. keep it from your heart

a. many make the mistake of looking at the OT system of works and rites and believing that all God cared about then was the works and not whether or not they came from the heart

b. not so; God has always desired that his people serve him because they want to from the heart

1. 1 Samuel 16:7

2. Mark 12:32-34

3. such a life will lengthen your life and add peace to it

a. who could argue that the wisdom of the Bible has this benefit?

b. lengthening of life

1. activities that endanger the body are to be avoided

a. alcohol, drugs and cigarettes

b. promiscuity and homosexuality

2. peace

a. marriages disciplined by God are free of suspicions of infidelity, of harsh language, and of vengeful malice

b. friendships disciplined by God are based on trust and love

c. employees and employers disciplined by God trust each other, do not cheat each other

d. a soul disciplined by God glorifies God and pleases Him and that soul is at peace through the assurance of forgiveness

#### B. The Prodigal Son

1. had lived in his father's house for years and been disciplined by his words and commands

2. but he came to appoint in his life when he was no longer satisfied with them anymore and he went out to seek his own path

3. it wasn't long before he had wasted his possessions and found himself in danger of starvation

a. a famine arose and blessings were in short supply

b. he ended up feeding pigs and wishing he could get in the mud with them and share their bounty for no one gave him anything

#### C. The Modern Prodigal

1. as teenage Christians grow older, they are wooed by the sins of the world and seek to blaze their own trail in the world

2. as some Christians reach college age, they become dissatisfied with the Law of God and seek higher meanings in the philosophies of men (don't concern me with the law, just make me feel good about myself: improve my self-esteem!)

3. they find themselves experimenting with things they always knew to be wrong and yet are now "rethinking"

a. lives are shortened and souls are destroyed when the heart grows bored and dissatisfied

- b. peace disappears when the law of God is forgotten
  - 1. trustworthiness dries up
  - 2. suspicions abound as evil spreads in one's life
  - 3. there is no peace with God when one disobeys Him and experiments with the devil

## II. Mercy And Truth

### A. Proverbs 3:3-4

- 1. don't let mercy and truth depart from you
  - a. God has always dealt with man using mercy and truth
  - b. Jesus provides the example and leads us to follow it
  - c. when we see the widow and the fatherless, when someone sins against us, when someone owes us something, never fail to exercise mercy
  - d. in every arena of our lives, honesty is the best policy
- 2. the commitment to these principles should be so strong that the principles are engraved upon our minds
  - a. we don't have to always pause and tell ourselves to show mercy or to be honest, it begins to come naturally through habit
  - b. at the same time, we keep in our minds, the mercy of God toward us and His wonderful Truth and we are disciplined by that knowledge
  - 3. it seems a great paradox to the Bible student to find it possible to be in the favor and high estimation of men and God simultaneously
    - a. yet if we dwell in mercy and truth, God says it is possible
    - b. we serve God first and deviate from his law
      - 1. men see our mercy and our honesty and are impressed by the strength of our convictions, that we practice what we preach, that we can be trusted with anything
      - 2. no, they may not always agree with our stands, but they will respect our integrity
      - c. God will look upon us as righteous and man will look on us as trustworthy and respectable

### B. The Prodigal Son

- 1. his life turned into anything but a godly example
- 2. he wasted his inheritance on prodigal living: the imagination runs wild as to what he spent it on in particular
- 3. in the eyes of his father, he was lost and wandering
- 4. in the eyes of men, he was esteemed as no better than the swine in the mire
  - a. he was starving
  - b. no one would help him

### C. The Modern Prodigal

- 1. mercy is at a premium in our day
  - a. we depend on the state to care for the widow and the fatherless and every other downtrodden, when we ought to be motivated by Jesus to individually show mercy to them
  - b. when someone sins against us or offends us, we look spitefully upon them, never telling them their offense, for the thorn in our flesh is pervertedly pleasurable
  - c. when someone owes us, we think, "Pay me what thou owest!"
  - d. the "ME Generation" lives
- 2. truth is considered a quaint novelty today
  - a. I heard the other day that car dealers are trying a new approach with customers: honesty
  - b. nobody trusts anyone because so few are worthy
  - c. even the Christian winks at "little white lies" and lies that supposedly don't hurt anyone, and rationalizes away the clear truth

## III. Trust In The Lord

### A. Proverbs 3:5-6

- 1. there's the heart again
  - a. so much deeper a relationship than robotic compliance with the law

- b. compliance is still there: still necessary, but the heart is behind the hands
- 2. trust requires that we place our lives and our souls in his hands to direct
  - a. on January 14, 1988, I removed my life and soul from my own hands and placed them in Jesus's
  - b. Galatians 2:20
    - 1. passages abound that reveal the inability of man to direct his own steps
    - 2. life shows it to be true
- 3. instead, we must acknowledge the will of God in everything that we do
  - a. in every action I take and every thought I have, I must consider the wisdom of God
  - b. what does God say about what I am doing?
  - c. trust and a circumcised heart will lead me to obey
- 4. God will direct our paths
  - a. the image of a path through the forest in the thick of the night
    - 1. the world provides no light, only pitfalls and obstacles
    - 2. and yet there is a light; there is a map
  - b. "Thy word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path" (Psalm 109:105).

#### B. The Prodigal Son

- 1. he realized this, fortunately, before it was too late: Luke 15:17-19
  - a. he realized how bankrupt his life in the world was
  - b. he was in famine while there was a feast at his father's house
- 2. meaning
  - a. the parable is a picture of repentance
  - b. the prodigal son is a symbol of any Christian that wanders away from His Father in heaven
  - c. a life without the word of God is a famine and poverty
  - d. the penitent realize that and return

#### C. The Modern Prodigal

- 1. like those young folks before that are enticed to depart, time exists now to return
- 2. to see the light and walk by the map
- 3. to lean on his understanding and seek his pattern of salvation

### **Conclusion**

Trust Him.



# Peace Through The Blood of His Cross

by J.S. Smith • delivered 5 February 1995 • Austin, Texas

## Introduction

- i. In five short verses in the opening chapter of the letter to the Colossian saints, Paul summarizes the gospel scheme of redemption fully and succinctly. He takes us all the way through the why and how God desires our salvation.
- ii. [Read Col. 1:19-23.]

## Discussion

### I. Reconciliation

#### A. Alienation and Separation

1. Paul tells these saints that prior to their conversion, they were alienated from God and had established themselves as his enemies both in the thoughts of their minds and in the actions of their hands
  2. prior to their conversion, they walked in the Gentile gait: Eph. 4:17-19
    - a. in the futility of their own minds
      1. seeking a meaning and purpose in life that they feel comfortable with
      2. making rules that they deem reasonable
    - b. their understanding was darkened
      1. ostensibly, they sought to comprehend the world around them
      2. but as they noted the evidence of Creation, they gave credit to the creature rather than the Creator (to the sun and the moon and the sea)
      3. they pressed on and the veil of unenlightened lack of comprehension grew blacker
    - c. they were alienated from the life of God because of their growing ignorance and hardening heart
      1. their ignorance of His purpose for them and his will put them on a path of ungodliness
      2. it was not a life of God, but rather a life of self, ultimately the devil
      3. while they refused the obvious evidence of God and resisted the Truth, their hearts grew opposed to God even more
    - d. they are past feeling
      1. there was a time when their disobedience tugged at their consciences
      2. but they had burned their consciences so often, that it became seared and unable to feel that tug anymore
    - e. their work was in pursuit of uncleanness
      1. ignoring God emboldens one to walk with no moral compass
      2. not only that but doing it with greediness, compulsively and insatiably
  3. they were without Christ: Eph. 2:12
    - a. aliens and strangers from the commonwealth of Israel
    - b. strangers from the promises of God: no reward outside the covenant
    - c. no hope of forgiveness or salvation
    - d. without God in the world
      1. quite a surprise to a culture with a pantheon of gods covering everything they misunderstood
      2. their gods were as useless as those Elijah encountered in 1 Kings 18: 1 Kings 18:20-22
        - a. Elijah proposed a test to show them the fantasy of Baal versus the majesty of Jehovah: 1 Kings 18:23-24
        - b. Elijah allowed the Baalists to go first and he waited until noon to see Baal act: 1 Kings 28:27
        - c. Elijah upped the odds when it came to his turn: he had the people pour water all around the altar to make it more difficult in their eyes: 1 Kings 18:35-38

#### B. Interlude

1. there are a billion people in the world today in this very situation described in these passages
2. description
  - a. trusting in the schemes of human invention: salvation by system of works, salvation by faith alone, universal salvation

- b. fantasizing about mythological gods and energies, trusting fraudulent sorcerers and gurus
- c. hearts always hardening by daily refusal to submit to God
- d. consciences being seared by persistent sin like a cow being branded: no feeling anymore
- e. enslaved by greed, gluttony and material obsession
- f. strangers from God's promises of salvation
- g. bowing down to false Gods all the time
  - 1. every man has a god
  - 2. some serve the true God of Heaven
  - 3. others serve the dollar or the flesh or the television or another hobby
  - 4. but everyone serves a god, the true God or any one of a number of idols
  - 5. everyone worships on Sunday morning
    - a. some worship the God of heaven
    - b. others worship the dollar or the television or the mattress or a hobby

#### B. Reconciliation: Eph. 2:14-16

- 1. Jews and Gentiles alike are reconciled to God through the blood of the cross
- 2. there is no other means; there is no other way: 2 Cor. 5:17-21
  - a. reconciliation to God is not a process without visible evidence
    - 1. Christ died that "...those who live should no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again" (2 Cor. 5:15)
    - 2. reconciliation brings about a new man living after Christ and disposes of the old man of sin (Eph. 4)
      - b. Paul's ministry, his work, was about this reconciliation of man to God
        - 1. by means of the Messiah
        - 2. man was reconciled as his sins were forgiven
        - 3. the power was in the word of the gospel
        - 4. the plea of the gospel to an alienated and sinful world: "Be reconciled to God."
- 3. the blood of the cross: Heb. 9:11-16

## II. Presentation

### A. Presentation in the Day of Judgment

- 1. specifically in the day of judgment, that Christ might deliver up the church, individuals within it, without spot or blemish or any such thing
- 2. Eph. 5:27

### B. Holy, Blameless and Irreproachable

- 1. *holy* (from same Greek word as "saints", meaning set aside to God and exclusively his): a responsibility of man to live a life that is holy: 1 Peter 1:13-19 and 2 Peter 3:1-12
- 2. *blameless* (from Greek word *αμωμος*, meaning without blemish)
  - a. all the blemishes upon his soul will be washed away by the cleaning agent of Christ's blood when he contacts that blood in obedience to the gospel
  - b. his robes will be washed in the water of regeneration (Titus 3)
  - c. blameless does not refer to one who is perfect by way of living a totally sinless existence
    - 1. except in the case of Jesus
    - 2. a man is blameless when he takes responsibility for his sins and receives forgiveness for them in baptism and repentance
- 3. *irreproachable* (means no one will have material with which to accuse him before God)
  - a. there will be no remaining crime that might be raised in judgment day to object to one's eternal reward
    - b. all errors will have been forgiven through Christ
    - c. as no one could find a righteous accusation against Christ
      - 1. no one will find a righteous accusation against an obedient Christian in judgment
      - 2. but there will be no occasion for false witnesses in that day!

### III. Building Conditions

#### A. Build Upon a Solid Foundation

1. grounded upon a solid foundation: Christ, his words and the words of his inspired servants: Eph. 3:19-22

2. “rooted and grounded in love” (Eph. 3:17): Matthew 7:24-27

3. faith built upon other foundations is on sandy ground

a. built upon family tradition

b. built upon compromise to get along with spouse or steady

#### B. Continue Building Upon It

1. the word is “if”

a. it denotes that such a presentation by Christ is based upon a condition

b. that condition is that one must continue in the faith

c. he must be always building upon it

1. he cannot tear it down and hope to be saved

2. he cannot stop building upon it and hope to be saved

3. he cannot build upon it with materials outside of faith and hope to be saved

2. nothing can deter you from an increasing faith: Romans 8:31-39

3. God leads us to endurance through his might: Col. 1:11 and Heb. 10:35-39

#### C. Not Switching To Another Foundation

1. the allurements of new age philosophies and religions is great in our day

a. Scientology, Eastern Religions, Earth Worship, Angel Worship, Humanism

b. these are different foundations, they are cracked and unstable

c. they are on sandy ground and are washed away

2. the allurements of sin capture the interest of many and form a new foundation upon which there is no safety

3. when we switch to another foundation, we make ourselves aliens and enemies all over again

### Conclusion



# Count The Cost

by J.S. Smith • delivered 12 February 1995 • Austin, Texas

## Introduction

i. We find Jesus in Luke 18 approached by a righteous and sincere ruler who asked the great question of all time. Jesus's response is troubling to many as it was to the one who asked it. Yet we can learn so much from it.

## Discussion

### I. Tough Love of Jesus: Luke 18:18-23

#### A. A Righteous Man Lacks One Thing

1. the question is wonderful and one that we all asked at one time
2. Jesus's answer is based upon obedience to the commands under which the questioner lived
  - a. the ruler must have smiled as he said he had kept them all from his youth until now
  - b. he must have been expecting a commendation and assurance that he need do nothing more
3. "Then Jesus looking at him, loved him" (Mark 10:21)
  - a. whatever happens next, we are about to see the love of Jesus upon him
    1. does he love him by saying, well done, go your way, my friend
    2. does he love him by smiling politely and saying nothing
  - b. He has the nerve to say, *one thing you lack*
    1. this is tough to fathom in our era of self-esteem therapy and positive mental attitude fostered by Norman Vincent Peale and Benjamin Spock
    2. why did Jesus tell him this?
      - a. go back to his question: he wanted to know what he needed to do to be saved
      - b. Jesus told him that he must obey God's commands
      - c. the ruler was pleased because he had
      - d. but Jesus added, you are still short of salvation because you lack one thing: there is a treasure in your heart that displaces God from his throne there
        1. like the debate teacher I had who would go over my arguments before a debate and find me to be well-prepared and yet she would say, you lack one thing in being as ready as you can be
        2. like the father who is teaching his daughter to drive and is amazed at what a great job she is doing but as day turns to night, he says to her, one thing you lack, you need the headlights on now
        3. without such care, the debater loses when he could have won and the girl learns everything to drive safely instead of just 95%
        4. so Jesus tries to prepare the ruler instead of leaving him with a false sense of security when he was yet a distance from the kingdom

#### B. Jesus Requires Sacrifice: Luke 14:25-33

1. willingness to sacrifice
  - a. be willing to give up family relationships that interfere with service to God
  - b. be willing to give up pleasures of life and purposes of life: even life itself!
  - c. bear his cross: walk in the same path of scorn and suffering that Jesus did
  - d. count the cost
    1. are you ready to do all this to be a disciple of Christ
    2. count the cost first; don't endanger yourself to failure later
2. the ruler did count the cost but he could not give up the treasure of his heart
  - a. Jesus said, one thing you lack, and that one thing was not something the ruler could give up
  - b. what might that one thing be in your life?

#### C. Disqualifiers

1. Romans 1:29-31
  - a. unrighteousness
  - b. sexual immorality
  - c. wickedness
  - d. covetousness

- e. maliciousness
  - f. envy
  - g. murder
  - h. strife
  - i. deceit
  - j. evil-mindedness
  - k. whispering
  - l. backbiters
  - m. hating God
  - n. violent
  - o. proud
  - p. boasting
  - q. inventing evil things
  - r. disobedience to parents
  - s. undiscerning
  - t. untrustworthy
  - u. unloving
  - v. unforgiving
  - w. unmerciful
2. 1 Corinthians 6:9-10
- a. unrighteous
  - b. fornicators
  - c. idolaters
  - d. adulterers
  - e. homosexuals
  - f. sodomites
  - g. thieves
  - h. covetous
  - i. drunkards
  - j. revilers
  - k. extortioners
3. Galatians 5:19-22
- a. adultery
  - b. fornication
  - c. uncleanness
  - d. licentiousness
  - e. idolatry
  - f. sorcery
  - g. hatred
  - h. contentions
  - i. jealousies
  - j. outbursts of wrath
  - k. selfish ambitions
  - l. dissensions
  - m. heresies
  - n. envy
  - o. murders
  - p. drunkenness
  - q. revelries
  - r. and the like
4. Ephesians 5:5
- a. fornicator
  - b. unclean person
  - c. covetous man (idolater)
5. Revelation 21:7-8

- a. cowardly
- b. murderers
- c. sexually immoral
- d. sorcerers
- e. idolaters
- f. liars

## II. Danger of Riches: Not Necessarily Possession of Riches: Luke 18:24-30

### A. Often in the Attaining of Riches: 1 Tim. 6:9-10

1. example of tax Collectors who took more than required to line their own pockets
2. example of judges who took bribes to ensure a judgment
3. example of those devoured widow's houses
4. example of an elder who was eager for filthy lucre
5. example of gambler who covets the money of others
6. example of thief who steals out rightly from others
7. example of deceiver who cheats others

### B. Often in the Retention of Riches

1. unwillingness to share with others; to show hospitality
2. unwillingness to give to the treasury of the church as God has prospered you, according to the commands for the first day of the week in 1 Cor. 16

### C. Often in the Trust Placed in Riches: 1 Timothy 6:17-19

1. Matthew 6:19-21, 24
  - a. mammon (μαμωνας) is defined by Thayer as "what is trusted in...treasure...riches: Matt. 6:24 and Luke 16:13 (where it is personified and opposed to God...)"
    - b. Jesus warns some will try to serve two masters: they will try to serve God and something else at the same time
      1. Jesus says it cannot be done
      2. one or the other will emerge as preeminent and the other will decrease
  2. covetousness is idolatry: Eph. 5:3-5
    - a. verb in verse 3 from Greek, πλεονεξια, meaning "to desire to have more, always in a bad sense...used in a general way" [in Eph. 5:3] (Vine).
    - b. noun form in verse 5 from Greek, πλεονεκτης, meaning "eager to have more, i.e., to have what belongs to others" (Vine): Colossians 3:5
      1. from same Greek word as former point
      2. establishes forever that idolatry is not confined to kneeling before stone and wood images, but bowing before the object of this passion as well

## Conclusion



# A Great Gulf Fixed (1): Where Are The Dead?

by J.S. Smith • delivered 5 February 1995 • Austin, Texas

## Introduction

i. We will ask the question tonight and answer it over the next three weeks: What is the fate of the soul after death? This is a question that confounds a world that looks everywhere but the Bible for the answer. Many Christians are likewise confused about the subject. God chose to disclose the details sparingly in different areas and abundantly in others. This seems to correspond to the areas in which we can and can not affect in our lives. We want to respect God's voice as well as his silence in this series: we will not attempt to define things with guesswork, rather we will depend on the scriptures.

ii. This first lesson will center on some words that are clear in the original Greek language, but have been confused and watered down in the English. The second lesson will speak to what goes on between death and the resurrection to judgment. Is there time for repentance? Is it purgatory? Can the dead speak to the living?

iii. The final lesson in two weeks will deal with the last day, the day of the Lord, the day of judgment. What do the scriptures say will happen when the trump sounds?

iv. When the lessons conclude, we hope to have a firmer understanding about the fate of the soul after death.

## Discussion

### I. The Language of "Hell"

#### A. *Hades*

##### 1. from Greek, *αιδης*

a. the common receptacle of disembodied spirits

b. many see the word hell in the KJV or hades anywhere and immediately imagine a place of torment and punishment

1. unfortunately the word hell is a general term used to translate three different Greek words meaning three related, but different things

2. hades does not refer particularly to a place of torment, but generally, to the place where souls abide after the death of the body

3. keep this in mind throughout or you will be lost quickly: when you hear "hades", think general home of all souls, good or wicked

##### 2. corresponds to Hebrew word, "Sheol": Psalm 16:10

a. Peter quoted this prophetic Hebrew psalm about the death and resurrection of Christ in Acts 2:25-31

b. he used the Greek word, hades, where the Hebrew "Sheol" had been, thus these two are synonymous

1. Christ's body was laid in the grave, but his soul went into hades

2. hades, again refers to the abode of the spirits of the dead, good or evil

3. all souls, upon physical death, go into hades

### B. Two Departments of Hades

#### 1. *Paradise*

a. from Greek for that part of Hades...which is the abode of the souls of the pious until the resurrection

b. when Christ died, he went into hades, but he did not go into torment

c. he went into paradise of hades: Luke 23:39-43

1. Jesus told him that he would join Christ in paradise that day

2. they both died bodily and their spirits went down into hades

3. but they went to the department of hades known as Paradise

#### 2. *Tartarus*

a. translated as hell also, but more specifically...

1. from Greek for that part of hades which is the abode of the wicked dead

2. 2 Peter 2:4: final judgment has not yet happened to those in Tartarus

3. the resurrection to judgment has not yet happened

## C. Eternal Homes

### 1. *Hell*

a. Gehenna, from Greek word, γέεννα

1. this was a valley south and east of Jerusalem where children were sacrificed to Molech and where later Jews disposed of refuse and bodies

2. Jesus used it in his teaching as a symbol of penalty

a. Matthew 5:22: in danger of hell fire

b. Matthew 5:29-30: judgment for sins of lust

c. Matthew 10:28: destruction of both body and soul in hell

d. Matthew 23:15: sons of hell made by proselyting Pharisees

e. Matthew 23:33: punishment of evil people

f. James 3:6: tongue is a fire set by hell

b. this is the eternal home of the wicked following the final judgment

c. of eternal hell, descriptions are many: Jesus taught most on the subject: Matt. 25:30-41 and Mark 9:42-48

### 2. *Heaven*

a. this is the eternal home of the righteous following the final judgment

b. is a place of rest and an abode with God: Matthew 25:19-21

## II. Visualization

### A. Luke 16:19-31

1. this is said to be a parable and some object, therefore, that it is not an accurate picture of the subject

a. admittedly, the main lesson is about the folly of trust in riches

b. but still, Jesus never exaggerated or fictionalized in any parable and so the background is as trustworthy as any other message of his

2. first note the distinction between the two: one good, the other wicked

a. both died and their souls were separated from their bodies

b. good Lazarus went to Abraham's bosom where he was treated as he never was in life: with respect and love and comfort

c. the wicked rich man was sent to the tormenting department of hades where he suffered

d. between them, Abraham said, was a great gulf fixed that prevented anyone from ever crossing from torment to comfort

e. finally, there is allowed no communication from the dead to the living

### B. Diagram

## Conclusion

# A Great Gulf Fixed (2): Between Death and Resurrection

by J.S. Smith • delivered 19 February 1995 • Austin, Texas

## Introduction

i. We will continue our study tonight of the question: What is the fate of the soul after death? This first lesson centered on some words that are clear in the original Greek language, but have been confused and watered down in the English. We discussed heaven, hell and hades. That material will be available in copied form later this month.

ii. This second lesson will speak to what goes on between death and the resurrection to judgment. Is there time for repentance? Is it purgatory? Can the dead speak to the living?

iii. The final lesson in next week will deal with the last day, the day of the Lord, the day of judgment. What do the scriptures say will happen when the trump sounds?

iv. When the lessons conclude, we hope to have a firmer understanding about the fate of the soul after death.

v. It is necessary that we review briefly what we noted last time. After physical death, the souls of both the righteous and the wicked go into a place called hades divided by a great gulf. The wicked are positioned in torment on one side while the righteous are comforted on the other. During this period, the soul awaits final judgment to heaven or hell. It is that period which we will study tonight

## Discussion

### I. Is This Purgatory?

#### A. What Is Purgatory?

1. in its entry on the Catholic Church, Compton's Encyclopedia says this: "Details of the afterlife are necessarily sketchy. There is a belief in heaven and hell as well as in an *intermediate state called purgatory for those who do not deserve the punishment of hell but are not yet sufficiently purged of their sins to be in heaven.*"

2. in fact, Catholic belief tends toward the position that few are good enough to go to heaven and few are bad enough to go to hell, so purgatory is very crowded

3. it does not originate with the Bible, but arose near the end of the seventh century A.D.

4. their own dictionary claims no scripture for purgatory: "We would appeal to those general principles of scripture rather than to particular texts often alleged in proof of Purgatory. We doubt if they contain an explicit and direct reference to it."

#### B. Expounding

1. Catholic purgatory is supposedly between heaven and hell

2. the purgatory doctrine is that if one died in sin, he could be set free from torment by payment of some sum of money to the priests by an interested party still on earth, but the Bible reveals the true price: 1 Cor. 6:20 and 7:23 and Acts 20:28

3. it is called a place of purification where a man purges his sins with physical suffering and the efforts of friends on earth

4. the Catholic church benefits financially

#### C. Take It To The Next Logical Step (McClintock and Strong, Vol. 4, page 622)

1. destroys all motives for man living a penitent life on earth: Eph. 5:15-17

2. it ignores and defies the appointment of death: Hebrews 9:27

3. it bridges the great gulf fixed (Luke 16:26)

4. it gives man a second chance after death

5. it places the keys to hades in the hands of mere men called priests

6. Catholic authorities admit a perversion of scripture to create purgatory

7. it is without scripture

#### D. Summary

1. the time between death and the resurrection to judgment is not purgatory

2. there is no scripture to suggest a time of second chance after death

3. salvation's price tag is the blood of Christ, not a check and not man's works alone

## II. Is It a Time For Repentance?

### A. Now Is The Time For Repentance

1. God has appointed this lifetime for repentance: Acts 17:26-31
2. life and death is like a newspaper deadline or a term paper deadline
  - a. a newspaper has to be sent to press at a certain time
  - b. that time is unchangeable
  - c. when the time comes: 2 am, say: there is no more time to edit a story
  - d. when a term paper is due at 8 am on Monday, there is not opportunity to start writing it on

Tuesday

e. when death comes, time to work or live or write our own autobiography is past the deadline:  
Hebrews 9:27

### B. The Future Is Not

1. now is the time to serve, for the grave is a powerless time: Eccl 9:10
2. Luke 16:19-31
  - a. the rich man isn't working to bridge the gulf
  - b. he is certainly regretting his life, but it is too late

## III. Is It A Time For Messages From the Dead To The Living

### A. Back To The Rich Man in Tartarus

1. his memory was of his family living lives like his that would lead them to join him
2. he wanted to send them a message: "Don't follow me here!"
3. he was denied the opportunity to speak to them or send them the message
4. do you believe in seances?

### B. There Is One Message From The Dead

1. what the rich man could not do for his own family, he has done for the living of eras since
2. if you are outside of Christ or straying from His guidance, will you hear him speak to you tonight?
  3. his message is as clear to you as he desired it be to his own family: "Don't follow me here!"
  4. Abraham speaks also: hear Moses and the prophets, but especially hear the one who did rise from the dead: Matt. 10:32-33

## Conclusion

Now is the time for repentance, friends. Won't you respond to the gospel call before the day arrives and the time of preparation ceases. Avoid the fate of the rich man, seeking the reward of good Lazarus, who suffered in this life, as we do, but is comforted in Paradise.

# A Great Gulf Fixed (3): In The Resurrection Day

by J.S. Smith • delivered 26 February 1995 • Austin, Texas

## Introduction

- i. We will complete our survey of the fate of the soul after death tonight. You will recall that we began two weeks ago talking about Heaven, Hell and Hades, defining each term from the Greek language and all the pertinent scriptures. Last Lord's Day, we talked about false theories about hades and purgatory.
- ii. Tonight, we will conclude with a study of the events to take place in the last Day, the day of judgment, or the resurrection day.
- iii. To state our goal once again in using three weeks of our time on this subject: we hope to have a firmer understanding about the fate of the soul after death.

## Discussion

### I. In The Last Day

#### A. Just Before The Trump Sounds

1. there will still be a population of people upon the earth, serving or rejecting Christ
2. Hades, the common receptacle of all souls, good or wicked, will hold its population as well
  - a. the righteous, like the Lazarus and the thief, in the comfort of Paradise
  - b. the wicked, like the rich man and the rebellious angels, in the torments of Tartarus

#### B. When The Trump Sounds: I Thess. 4:13-17

1. the Lord will descend from heaven into the clouds above us with a shout and the sound of a trumpet
2. the souls of the dead will rise first
  - a. here, the souls of the righteous are specified because they were the subject of the Thessalonians' confusion
  - b. but the souls of the wicked will also be resurrected to be judged
3. those who are still living in the day of Christ will then be judged
  - a. the righteous will be caught up in the air with Christ and the dead righteous
  - b. the wicked will join the wicked dead in the fire of hell

### II. Resurrected to Judgment

#### A. Judgment for All

1. all will be resurrected to be judged: 2 Cor. 5:10 and Rom. 2:5-10
2. the standard is established and all of us will be judged by it: John 12:48

#### B. The Separation Will Take Place

##### 1. Matt. 25:31-33

- a. here is the final judgment
- b. the Shepherd is examining all the souls of all times
- c. he is removing the goats from among His sheep

##### 2. Matt. 25:34-40

- a. he will set the sheep on his right hand
- b. he will pastor them into heaven
- c. the praise he gives them will be a true honor for their humility and trust

##### 3. Matt. 25:41-46

- a. the incredulous goats will be placed on his left hand
- b. his condemnation against them will be their lack of service to him or his little ones
- c. they will be swept away into everlasting punishment

##### 4. Matt. 25:46

- a. not the division that takes place and the consequences
- b. the wicked go to *everlasting* punishment while the righteous go to *eternal* life
- c. this is the sentence: either Gehenna or Heaven
- d. when this day comes, it will be too late to do anything about it or argue for your eternal fate

### III. Heaven And Hell Remain

#### A. Hell

1. the wicked dead of Tartarus will be united with the wicked living on earth in that Day and all will go down into eternal Hell fire
2. don't be deceived
  - a. did you see the pictures of the earthquake in Japan recently
    1. did you see the anguish and hear the cries of the injured and homeless wandering through the crumbled streets
    2. did you feel their misery and hear their pain
  - b. that was nothing compared to hell
    1. Hell is a place of wailing and gnashing of teeth
    2. that anguish in Japan has subsided in large degree with time
    3. in hell, the misery only continues day in and day out forever
3. you ought to be living a life that keeps you as far away from this place as you can

#### B. Heaven

1. the righteous dead of Paradise will be united with the righteous living on earth in that Day and all will ascend into Heaven
2. a place of rest and reward
  - a. suffering of life will be finished forever and glory will emerge: Rom. 8:18
  - b. it is a place of rest (Hebrews 4)
3. it is a place of reunion
  - a. I want each of you to think of someone you know and love, a friend or relative that has died: a Christian, one who lived a life in search of God's approval and of heaven
  - b. imagine being reunited with that person in heaven
  - c. wonderful, to think of, isn't it?
  - d. maybe it is your wife or husband or brother or sister or best friend
  - e. the short time you spent with them here on earth in the midst of pain and suffering and disappointment will be overshadowed by an eternity of joy with them
  - f. you don't want to miss that, do you?

### Conclusion

I hope this series has been of benefit to you. If you are not a Christian, please be honest with yourself and hear the words of warning from Jesus. Trust in him tonight and come to him in repentance and obedience. If you are a Christian, examine your life and make sure you are on the right path.

# More Than Conquerors

by J.S. Smith • delivered 19 February 1995 • Austin, Texas

## Introduction

- i. [Read Romans 8:31-39.]
- ii. This passage is one of the greatest in providing encouragement to the Christian. but it also serves to show the one outside of Christ what he or she is missing. Whatever state you are in this morning, study this topic and let the scriptures guide you.

## Discussion

### I. What God Gives You

#### A. Forgiveness of Sins

1. in instituting the Lord's Supper, Jesus said, "This is my blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins (Matt. 26:28)."
2. it was repentance and remission of sins that Jesus commanded to be preached in His name beginning in Jerusalem (Luke 24:47): Acts 2:38-40 ("I forgive you.")
3. for Christians who stray, there remains a path back to Christ: 1 John 1:6-9
  - a. the Christian will sin from time to time, but he does not walk in sin
  - b. he practices righteousness, not sin
  - c. if he walks in the light, he has fellowship with Christ and other Christians
  - d. if we sin, we can repent and if we repent, Jesus will cleanse us

#### B. A New Life

1. I don't know about you, but my life before and after Jesus is like the difference between night and day
2. fortunately, I came to know Christ before I did any more damage to my life
3. commitment to Christ brings with it a new life: Col. 3:1-10
  - a. one garment, spotted and filthy and contaminated is removed in favor of another, which is clean and spotless
  - b. during the Korean war, the uniforms of captured Chinese soldiers were immediately burned because of the disease and bugs they carried
  - c. a Christian burns that old garment and puts on a new one: Titus 2:11-12

#### C. Freedom

1. freedom is that most sought after quality of life for which millions have died
  - a. from the Hebrews behind Moses to Americans behind Washington to the Chechens in Russia, freedom has been a beacon in the darkness
  - b. slavery was outlawed in America and most of the world because it is deemed by man to be an inalienable right, endowed by God
  - c. but this is physical, earthly freedom
  - d. the gospel doesn't promise this, but a freedom more important
2. Romans 6:12-18
  - a. look at your life if you are not a Christian, are there certain sinful things which you engage in?
  - b. the Bible calls that slavery, but offers you freedom through the teachings of Jesus and his apostles
  - c. slavery to an unkind and murderous master is replaced with service to a kind and loving Master in Heaven

#### E. Peace: Phil. 4:6-7

1. people, even many religious people, do not understand the peace of one who truly trusts in God
2. it is peace that gives us confidence to be more than conquerors
  - a. so often I feel like a sheep for the slaughter as Paul said back in Rom. 8
  - b. in my meek and humble life, I am vulnerable in life and death circumstances and little match for angels and principalities and powers
  - c. tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril and sword make me uneasy

d. "Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us (Rom. 8:37)."

## II. What We Can Be

### A. Christ-like

1. the word, "Christians," is used to refer to Jesus's followers (Acts 11:26 and 1 Peter 4:16)
  - a. it means like Christ
  - b. we refer to ourselves constantly as Christ-like
2. a great privilege and honor
  - a. it is a great honor to be compared to Moses for decisiveness or David for godliness or Paul for resiliency or Stephen for firmness
  - b. but we are not called after Moses or David or Paul or Stephen
  - c. we are called after one greater, after the Son of God, Jesus Christ

### B. Saints

1. in certain religions, sainthood is bestowed only on the exceptionally remarkable
2. in Christianity, sainthood is bestowed upon all those who are set apart in subjection to Christ to serve Him (1 Cor. 1:2 and elsewhere in the NT)

### C. Servants

1. of God, a benevolent master with your best interests and salvation at heart, rather than the devil, who has nothing good in mind at all
2. of men
  - a. one of the most admirable traits in mankind is the desire to do for other people
  - b. as a Christian, you do the best thing in the world for other people when you share Christ with them

## III. What We Can Have

### A. Good Life While On Earth

1. Jesus's teachings lead us to live wholesome lives
2. God gave life: he is best equipped to counsel how to use it
3. the world needs this message of peace, love and righteousness

### B. Good Life in Heaven: 1 Cor. 15:54-58

1. quite an understatement
2. death itself worries so many
  - a. in Christ, it is not so worrisome
  - b. its sting is gone because rest and reward await

## Conclusion

If you are a Christian today, take a moment and thank God for all these things. If not, why tarriest thou?

# Blessed Assurance

by J.S. Smith • delivered 26 February 1995 • Austin, Texas

## Introduction

i. There is no one perfect among us; no one who lives a life completely free of sin. Thankfully, Jesus made the great sacrifice that our sins might be forgiven. But what of the Christian who errs and commits sin: what shall he do? The book of 1 John will teach the Christian how to maintain an assurance of God's pleasure.

## Discussion

### I. Children of God (1 John 2:28-3:3)

#### A. A Great Blessing To Be Called Children of God

1. Gal. 3:26-4:7
2. this relationship is an expression of God's love for his people

#### B. People With Hope

1. Christians are people with hope and a reason to have hope
2. the hope of eternal salvation
3. when Christ appears to judge for eternity, Christians may bow before him with confidence: no shame over things done or in process

#### C. People With Hope Purify Themselves

1. the Christian has been baptized, washed away his sins
2. but what if he sins afterward?: 1 John 1:9
3. Acts 8:17-24 (note: not a presumptuous sin, a sin of ignorance)

### II. Life's Practices (1 John 3:4-9)

#### A. There Are Two Life's Practices Possible

1. the tenses in this passage indicate something that the English words do not
2. "committing sin" is better worded as "practicing sin" as the phrase "practice righteousness" indicates the opposite
3. and so we have two polar opposites possible (living in sin, living in righteousness)

#### B. Living In Sin Or Righteousness

1. sin is breaking God's law, from Greek  $\alpha\mu\alpha\rho\tau\iota\alpha$ , meaning literally, "to miss the mark"
  - a. one who decides to live in sin, to dwell in iniquity, is of the devil
  - b. this is not the one who commits a sin, regrets and repents
  - c. this is one who chooses to live a way that the devil chooses
2. righteousness is practiced by one born of God
  - a. a Christian must practice righteousness
  - b. not simply random acts of righteousness surrounded by an ungodly life

#### C. A Christian Is To Practice Righteousness

1. he is not to live in sin: verse 9
2. he is kept from stumbling by edifying his faith: Jude 20-25
  - a. build upon your faith; pray; keep yourselves in God's love
  - b. eagerly look for Christ with confidence
  - c. bow before his dominion and power

### III. The Message From the Beginning: 1 John 3:10-18

#### A. Sheep and Goats are Separated

1. imagery Jesus used to show separation in judgment of his sheep from the devil's goats among men
2. similar to the proving of all that goes on according to this passage
3. the children of God and the children of the devil are shown clearly by examining whether or not he practices righteousness and if he shows brotherly love

## B. Am I My Brother's Keeper?

1. this is an age old message: we should love one another
  - a. in the days of Cain and Abel, we remember that Cain killed Abel out of jealousy and hatred
  - b. when God asked Cain where his brother was, he replied, "I do not know. Am I my brother's keeper?"
  - c. the reply throughout the Bible is, "In so many ways, yes."
2. Cain is called a murderer because he killed his brother
3. a Christian is called a murderer because he does not love his brother
4. no murderer, of either variety, has a realistic hope for eternal life

## C. Lay Down Our Lives For The Brethren

1. the example is Jesus's sacrifice of his own body for us: John 15:12-13
  - a. laying down our lives for brethren, though, should not be confined to the unlikely opportunity to actually die for them
    1. laying down one's life for a brother can simply be putting his needs and feelings ahead of your own; decreasing self in favor of a brother, especially a brother in need or peril
    2. the example John gives of laying down one's life is not actually dying for him, but serving him
    3. when a brother who has possession of something sees a brother in need and refuses to help, we must wonder where is any evidence of God's love in that brother?
  - b. the immediate thought is of physical needs and that is good, but I want to point out a need that is far more important: spiritual needs: Gal. 6:1-2
    1. a brother who has strong spirituality who sees a brother in spiritual need, but chooses to do nothing leaves us to wonder where is any evidence of God's love in that brother
    2. when a brother is overtaken in a trespass and lacks the knowledge or will to correct himself, a spiritual brother is obligated to help him bear that burden by attempting to restore him with gentleness: James 5:19-20
      - a. when a new semester started in college, often times I would see freshman wandering around looking for their class rooms
      - b. compassionate upper classman that I was, I would offer to help them find the room or inform them that they were on the wrong side of campus
      - c. a compassionate person does not allow another to wander when he possesses the map
      - d. when a brother wanders away from Christ, a brother who has the love of God and brother in him will not hide the map and ignore his brother's journey to damnation
      - e. he will take that obligation up and try to turn him back to Christ, saving that soul from spiritual death and blotting away those sins by repentance
    2. are you willing to be inconvenienced to help a brother?
      - a. you might have to give up some leisure time to study with a new covert
      - b. you might have to expect some phone calls and visits or to make them
      - c. you might be adding another's burdens to your own; are you spiritual?: 1 John 3:18

## IV. Blessed Assurance: 1 John 3:19-21

### A. Division of Sheep and Goats

1. the distinction is made and it will be hearts and actions judged, not appearances or reputations
2. Hebrews 4:12-13

### B. Now or Later

1. our heart will either condemn us or vindicate us
2. God will judge your heart and its actions in the Day, but you can judge your heart and works now
  - a. you can do a preliminary check-up or a progress report now
  - b. use the same standard God will use in that Day

## Conclusion

# Zacchaeus, You Come Down!

by J.S. Smith • delivered 5 March 1995 • Austin, Texas

## Introduction

- i. The title of today's lesson is not an exact quote of the New Testament passage but rather a lyric from a song I sung as a child about the event we will study today. We will meet Zacchaeus and eavesdrop as he seeks and finds the Lord Jesus. Perhaps, one here today will seek Jesus and find him in willing obedience.
- ii. [Read Luke 19:1-10.]

## Discussion

### I. A Sinful Life

#### A. Heredity

1. the name, Zacchaeus, is a Hebrew name which means "pure"
2. Zacchaeus was a Jew, living in Jericho, among his brethren
3. like the Pharisees, he could make the hollow claim to righteousness based on a hereditary connection to Abraham
4. it was a joke when the Pharisees did it and it would be a joke for Zacchaeus to do it

#### B. Occupation

1. like Matthew the apostle, Zacchaeus had chosen a line of work that made him truly hated among his brethren
2. he had enlisted to serve the despised invaders from Rome who exacted a heavy financial cost from their conquests
3. the organization by which Caesar collected taxes was by farming out districts to chief publicans who then farmed out sections to low level publicans
  - a. Zacchaeus was a chief publican
  - b. he had obtained both power and wealth from the pockets and backs of his brethren

#### C. Wealth and Sin

1. to see the words, tax Col. lector and wealthy attached to the same man does not automatically mean that he sinned to achieve his wealth
  - a. but most of the time it does
  - b. honesty was not a characteristic commonly possessed by publicans
  - c. for this reason, they were hated among their own brethren as traitors and criminals
2. dishonesty, extortion and bullying were the usual methods of exacting an unreported profit from citizens that Caesar ignored
3. a tax Col. lector who simply, morally and legally did his job did not get rich
  - a. a rich publican indicated sin was at the root of his wealth
  - b. the context and the writer's mention of his wealth seem to indicate all this is true of Zacchaeus
4. Jesus spoke often of wealth, warning that riches will often prevent a man from following God
  - a. arrogance and independence are companions of wealth
  - b. humility is a casualty
  - c. Zacchaeus was this type of person when Jesus came walking through Jericho

### II. Seeking the Lord

#### A. Why?

1. Why would Zacchaeus want to see who this Jesus was?
  - a. he had probably heard stories about this supposed prophet, how he healed the sick and drew multitudes of adorers and followers
  - b. perhaps he was only curious because of Jesus's celebrity
    1. I don't get too excited when some neighbor of mine walks down the sidewalk on my street
    2. but if I looked out and saw Ronald Reagan walking there, I would get really excited
    3. I would want to catch a glimpse of this storied person for myself
    4. maybe Zacchaeus had this kind of simple intrigue at Jesus walking by

5. as a Jew, he surely knew something of the prophesied Messiah and the reports that this man was He

2. men and women begin to think about Jesus for any number of reasons

a. some are curious about Him, especially those in cultures where He is less known

b. some begin to wonder because of fear: after a life threatening experience, or the loss of a loved one or some other tragedy

c. faith might find a catalyst in any number of causes

#### B. Obstacles

1. Zacchaeus ran into a problem in his search to learn something about Jesus

a. he was short!

b. he was unable to catch the glimpse of Christ he desired

c. that which he earnestly desired was separated from him by an obstacle

d. a less diligent man might have gone home and given up and the consequences would have tremendous and eternal

2. the gospel message is alive and powerful in the world today but there are so many distractions, stumbling blocks and weeds in the field that can choke its influence if an individual allows them to: Mark 4:3-8, 13-20

a. some believe the word but are scorned because of it and choose to give it up rather than be ridiculed

b. the cares of this world swallow up the word with their power to trip us

c. some are deceived by the perceived power and false security of riches, as Zacchaeus might have been, standing arrogantly upon independence from man and God

d. some are distracted by the desire for other things

1. we want forgiveness but we also want to drink, fornicate and lie

2. we'll worry about salvation when it is closer to paying off: you know, when we're older and the fun is over

e. some are turned off by hypocrisy among their examples of Christianity

1. if that's what Jesus did for your life, I don't want any part of it!

2. gossip, self-pity, and regret are weeds

#### C. Diligence

1. but Zacchaeus didn't give up in his search for Christ so easily

a. the text says that he ran ahead of the procession and climbed swiftly up into a sycamore tree to see him as he passed by

b. the irony of the situation is pertinent

1. this Zacchaeus was a wealthy man, feared by all the Jews

2. he was powerful and independent

3. Jesus was poor and meek, despised by so many

4. yet, here is Zacchaeus leaving his house, straining to see the Lord, failing because of his lack of stature, sprinting to a tree, scurrying up, just to catch a look at this poor carpenter walking by

c. Jesus said of another man, that he was not far from the kingdom and the selfless humility that Zacchaeus was displaying placed him close to the kingdom too

2. Jesus requires a diligent search to arrive at faith

a. "Blessed are those who *hunger and thirst* for righteousness, For they shall be filled" (Matt. 5:6).

1. this is serious business

2. this is not a passing whim

3. a passing whim might have gotten Zacchaeus to the Jesus's road, but it never would have gotten him up into that tree

4. this is hunger that comes from a famine and thirst that comes from arid conditions: Heb. 11:6

b. it requires diligence to overcome the obstacles that the world throws at someone who is seeking after Christ

1. ultimately, it requires humility like Zacchaeus had

2. the humility to bow before a higher authority than Self

3. and for many, that is quite an obstacle
4. to stop defending our actions and inactions with “I think...” and begin obeying because Jesus has said “I know...”

### III. Salvation Comes to His House

#### A. What Did Jesus Say?

1. there is a noticeable gap between the time in which Jesus beckons Zacchaeus down from the tree and his monologue in verse 8
2. their conversation is not reported and we do not know what Jesus said to him
3. some things are evident, though
  - a. Jesus’s words convicted Zacchaeus of his transgressions against the Law of Moses
  - b. Jesus convinced him that he was indeed the higher authority, the Messiah, God Himself

#### B. True Repentance: Luke 19:8

1. this is not a statement about past behavior as it may appear in English
2. this is an abrupt conversion taking place
  - a. this is a wealthy tax collector saying I’m not going to rob and intimidate people anymore
  - b. and not only that, but if I have wronged anyone, I will repay him four times over
    1. Jewish law only required 20% penalty for someone who confessed his crime
    2. Zacchaeus said I will make full restitution for my sins
  - c. that is conversion: a change of heart, attitude and action
3. his repentance, you will note, is more than saying, “I’m sorry.”
  - a. his repentance was marked by fruits
  - b. when he made this commitment, he effectively gave up a large part of his grand earthly possessions and the opportunity to accrue anymore
  - c. his life would change from wealth to something more like the life Jesus led: fairness, justice and neighborly love

#### C. Son of Abraham: Luke 19:9-10

1. after conversion took place, Jesus proclaimed that this hated sinner was worthy to be called a son of Abraham, a son of faith, not flesh
2. the son of God came to seek the lost and save them
3. Zacchaeus was without God and hope, but not anymore
  - a. he diligently sought knowledge of Jesus
  - b. he refused the world’s distractions and was persuaded
  - c. he made a change: everyone has to be *converted* to Christ
  - d. he was saved from sin and punishment

### **Conclusion**

Are you following in Zacchaeus’s example today?



# Lifting Him Up

by J.S. Smith • delivered 5 March 1995 • Austin, Texas

## Introduction

i. We just sang song number 413 (*Hymns For Worship*, (Shepard and Stephens)), "Lift Him Up." I have to admit I have always had some problems with this song. There is the good and positive method of lifting Jesus up before the world but the Bible speaks of another way of lifting him up: one that is sad and negative. Let's talk today about how we lift Him up.

## Discussion

### I. We Preach Christ Crucified

#### A. The Crucifixion: John 12:27-32

1. the Father and Son converse here, not for their benefit, but for the benefit of the people standing around
  2. looking forward to the day of the crucifixion, Jesus tried to prepare them for his departure
    - a. they would certainly prove to be more troubled about it than was He
    - b. Jesus says, shall I ask God to save me from the crucifixion?
    - c. How can I?: this is the very reason that I came
    - d. I must be crucified to glorify the name of Jehovah
    - e. I must be crucified to draw the souls of men to me: to forgiveness and righteousness and the light of truth
    - f. all that Jesus had done and said was in preparation for this moment
  2. the last of the prophecies concerning his death were fulfilled: John 19:14-30
    - a. Christ breathed his last
    - b. this moment was the turning point in world history
      1. the world has not been the same since Jesus yielded up his Spirit
      2. in every facet, the world changed monumentally in an instant

#### B. This Is Our Message: 1 Corinthians 1:26-2:5

1. this passage compares perspectives
  - a. A Christian was sitting next to a sinful man in the park when a man passed a woman on the path in front of them. Just as they passed, a \$20 bill fell out of the woman's pocket without her notice. The man saw it happen, picked up the bill and ran after the woman to give it back to her. The Christian and the sinful man on the bench looked at one another and smiled. Almost simultaneously, each revealed why he was smiling: the Christian exclaimed, "What an honest man!": the sinful man cried out, "What an idiot!"
    1. one set of circumstances, but two very different perspectives
    2. one perspective righteous and disciplined by Christ, the other sinful and worldly
  - b. the same two perspectives are present in this passage
    1. the worldly perspective looks at faithful people and the gospel message and sees foolishness and weakness
    2. the godly perspective looks at faith and the gospel and defines nobility, might and wisdom as God does and that is different from the world
    - c. the world glorifies and elevates the worldly perspective while denigrating and scowling at righteousness
  2. and, yet, that is exactly the message that gospel preachers bring
    - a. not a message based upon the prevailing philosophies of the world
    - b. not a message tempered and amended to please men
    - c. not a message that makes sense or seems mighty by the world's standards
  3. it is the only message to bring
    - a. no room for the sensuality of Diana worship
    - b. no room for the legalism of Judaism
    - c. no room for the hatred of discipline of Dr. Spock and Humanism
    - d. no room for the doubts of Isaac Asimov
    - e. no room for the glorification of political candidates or humans

- f. when we preach, we must preach Jesus Christ and Him crucified and absolutely nothing else
  1. the message won't look as good as L. Ron Hubbard's thoughtful analysis in *Dianetics*
  2. it won't seem as mystical as James Redfield's *The Celestine Prophecy*
  3. all it will be is right
    - a. all of those other messages won't get you to heaven
    - b. most of them will actually send you off in the other direction
    - c. but Christ and Him crucified will point you toward God and heaven
  4. we lift up Christ when we preach Him and His sacrifice and give him that position before the world exclusively

## II. We Glorify Christ Daily Before Others

### A. A Special People: Titus 2:11-14

1. you have all heard the phrase "peculiar people" applied to Christians in the Bible
2. in newer translations, that phrase is rendered, "special people"
3. in any event, the thrust of the phrase is that God's people are different than the rest of the world: they stand out from the crowd
4. like that example I gave of the two men sitting in the park: they are utterly different
5. the Christian lifts Jesus up for all to see and believe in his every day life

### B. Honorable Conduct: 1 Peter 2:6-12

1. they are first believers with faith constructed on the elect and glorious cornerstone
2. they sing and speak praise to the Lord whom they trust who guided them out of darkness into light
3. their conduct in every aspect of life is honorable
  - a. like an American who travels in Mexico for the first time and stands out, not so much because of his skin, but because he doesn't understand the customs and habits that everyone else is immersed in
  - b. so a Christian is a stranger and pilgrim in this world because his customs and habits are different
  - c. in the former case, one is as good as another but in this spiritual case, one is clearly superior
4. life free of fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul: 1 John 2:15-17
  - a. they wage war against the soul because they are antithetical to God's will and proof that God is not top priority
  - b. lust of the flesh: illicit sexual desire, pursuit of fornication
  - c. lust of the eyes: coveting things that belong to another or are sinful
  - d. pride of life: puffed individually over others and without God
5. when outsiders seek to discredit you, they are foiled because only good works are observed and God is glorified: Jesus is lifted up in their sight: I Thessalonians 4:9-12
  - a. love the brethren
  - b. lead a quiet life
  - c. mind your own business
  - d. work with your hands: Ephesians 4:29
    1. nothing corrupt: gossip, malice, slander, hatred, wrath
    2. only that which imparts grace: kindness, love, practical criticism, truth
    3. you can sound like a Christian
6. we lift Christ up when we live like Jesus did and the world sees that this is right

## III. Some Crucify Him Afresh (Hebrews 6:1-8)

### A. Stagnation and Fruitlessness

1. context of this passage is Christians who had stagnated in the faith
  - a. they were no longer growing
  - b. because they were not growing: not learning and not trying, they were unable to understand right from wrong and were falling away
2. the writer exhorts them to resume increasing their ability and spiritual strength
3. he speaks of them as "once enlightened, hav[ing] tasted the heavenly gift...partakers of the Holy Spirit and the good word of God."

## B. Backsliding

1. these people are Christians
2. the writer's message is that they have tasted the very best thing ever, they have received the greatest gift there could ever be and for some unfathomable reason, they have thrown it back
  - a. a man who inherits a million dollars from his grandfather doesn't say no thanks
  - b. a fisherman who catches the biggest bass in the lake doesn't throw it back
  - c. a man or woman who finds Jesus doesn't slap him in the face, or worse...
3. a man foolish enough to refuse the inheritance or throw back a great dinner is too far gone to persuade to seek it again
  - a. a man or woman who turns his back on Christ: the best gift: has fallen away
  - b. how do you convince him to seek it again?

## C. We Lift Him Up When We Turn Back

1. it is more than just turning back, more than a slap in the face as I just said: Hebrews 6:6
  - a. we started this lesson reading about the crucifixion
  - b. the implication here is that the Christian who turns away from Jesus is metaphorically arresting the glorified Savior and lifting him back onto the cross to suffer, bleed and die all over again: yet for no purpose at all this time
    - c. in the eyes of those outside, Christ is shamed when one falls away
    - d. his humiliation on the cross was enough: it makes me ashamed that he had to do it in the first place because of me: why would you want to put him back there?
2. we lift Christ up if we fall away
  - a. this is not for the benefit of the world or as a sign of trust
  - b. just the opposite, it imperils the world as signals the end of trust
  - c. it also portends the destruction of our own soul

## Conclusion

We should all be lifting the Savior up before the world to exalt his glory and majesty. We should all be growing and bearing fruit so that we don't fall in danger of lifting him up to crucified afresh.



# Wash and Be Clean

by J.S. Smith • delivered 12 March 1995 • Austin, Texas

## Introduction

This may be the simplest lesson I have ever preached. It will probably be the simplest lesson to learn. I will dispense with the only complicated part of it now and very quickly. There exists in the Bible a number of related events in a type and antitype relationship: one event or person in the OT foreshadows a greater event or person in the New Testament. We can only discern this relationship through the benefit of retrospect: by looking back on two passages and seeing the relationship. We will study briefly tonight one of these instances.

## Discussion

### I. Naaman

#### A. A Desperate Situation (2 Kings 5:1-5)

1. Naaman was a successful and popular man, a military hero who was honored by the king of Syria
  - a. though he was not an Israelite, he had been guided to victory by Jehovah
  - b. though a mighty man of valor, he was nonetheless cursed with a terrible disease: leprosy, which apparently hadn't progressed too far in his case
2. Syria and Israel were unfriendly neighbors, but the loot of this particular raid turned out to be providential for Naaman
  - a. the maiden brought her faith with her into captivity and shared it, even with her enemies
  - b. Naaman's wife knew the desperation of his situation: there appeared to be no cure or relief for leprosy
    1. no doubt he had tried everything imaginable
    2. nothing worked, but his maiden proposed a different solution
3. desperate Naaman went straight to the king and begged the chance to visit Israel and seek the prophet who might relieve him of his burden
4. the king looked upon him with mercy and sent him on his way

#### B. God Is Able (2 Kings 5:6-10)

1. King Jehoram of Israel was not pleased to receive the Syrians' letter
  - a. he couldn't understand how he expected him to heal Naaman
  - b. he suspected that the Syrian king was picking a fight with him somehow
  - c. you can see his alarm and terror in the ripping of his clothes
  - d. Naaman was about to be sent back to Syria, unhealed of his leprosy and yet committed to false gods
2. But Elisha heard the news
  - a. he didn't have much respect for Jehoram's reaction
  - b. it showed a lack of knowledge and trust in Jehovah
  - c. Elisha took the challenge and told the king to send Naaman to him
3. Naaman came to Elisha's house
  - a. Naaman arrived on Elisha's door step and waited to be greeted and invited inside
    1. a visiting dignitary of his rank could expect respect and adoration as a matter of protocol
    2. but as Naaman waited to be bowed before and served, something unexpected happened
    3. his haughty attitude was attacked by the levelheadedness of Elisha
  - b. instead of putting out the white carpet for him, Elisha sent his messenger out to the door and gave him the instructions; Naaman didn't even get to see his savior, he was treated like anyone else
  - c. and then Elisha's prescription put the icing on the cake: go and wash in the Jordan and you will be cleansed; pretty simple: too simple?

#### C. Reasoning (2 Kings 5:11-14)

1. Naaman became furious and left Elisha's house
2. he complained bitterly about his prescription
  - a. surely he should have come out to me: look who I am
  - b. surely he should have put on a dramatic show and shouted in a deep voice some mystical words

- c. surely he should have waved his hands and commanded attention of all
  - d. surely he could have healed my leprosy with such a performance
  - e. I could have washed in cleaner, whiter waters of Syria if cleansing were really the answer
3. he went away in a rage
- a. but his servants came near and reasoned with him
  - b. if the prophet had ordered you to do something great: climb a great mountain, sit in sack cloth and ashes, or battle a mother lion for its cub: wouldn't you have gladly submitted to such instruction?
  - c. why then do you balk in pride and haughtiness when he merely tells you to wash and be clean?: why does something so simple become so complicated?
4. Naaman comes to his senses and travels down to the Jordan
- a. he dips seven times as Elisha had told him
  - b. and his flesh was restored like that of a child
  - c. verse 14 ends with a simple phrase, but it was glorious to Naaman
    - 1. he had learned humility
    - 2. he had learned that God's ways are higher than man's ways
    - 3. he had learned that what appears to be futile or foolish can be the essence of wisdom and trust
    - 4. he had learned of Jehovah and "he was clean"

## II. Modern Man

### A. A Desperate Situation

- 1. few people in the world see their situation as serious or desperate
  - a. if you are outside of Christ today, you may not think you are in a desperate situation
  - b. if it is any clue to you, God saw your situation as so desperate that he sent his only begotten son to suffer, bleed and die on a cross that you might be delivered from your circumstances
  - c. God looked with mercy upon you, saw that your life was not headed to heaven and provided the propitiation because he desires that all men come to a knowledge of the truth and that all men be saved
    - 2. scales and sores on Naaman's body are emblematic of the sin and filth that covers the soul of man
    - 3. but what to do about it?

### B. God Is Able

- 1. Jesus had caused his disciples to worry when he told the rich young ruler that he was yet far from the kingdom and proceeded to teach on the difficulty of saving a wealthy man: Matt. 19:25-26
- 2. Abraham understood that God is able: Rom. 4:20-25
- 3. like Naaman, man must realize his desperate situation and seek the wisdom and healing of God
  - a. Peter realized the source of this spiritual healing in John 6 when he proclaimed that Jesus has the "words of eternal life"
  - b. every word Jesus spoke and the Spirit revealed are words of life
  - c. Jesus has commanded that those words be preached in the world and in his name: words that lead a man to believe in him and to confess that faith and trust, to repent of the sins that Jesus and the Spirit convict

### C. Reasoning

- 1. the true antitype of Naaman's salvation is in words oft repeated in the New Testament
- 2. a message just as simple as the one Naaman heard (wash and be clean): Acts 22:12-16
  - a. "there's no power in that water," "seems so silly to me," "why would God command that?"
  - b. where's the big show, the dramatic speech and ceremony, why not some more honorable rite
  - c. is immersion in water too simple for some to accept?
- 4. the waters of the Jordan were no better than those of Syria but that was missing the point
  - a. the waters of a baptistery are not miraculous or any better, either; the point: trust and obedience
  - c. it doesn't matter what you think: this is what God has said
  - d. cleansing was conditional for Naaman and so it is for sinners: 1 Peter 3:21

## Conclusion

# Lions On Your Street

by J.S. Smith • delivered 12 March 1995 • Austin, Texas

## Introduction

i. We will look today at a metaphor common to both Testaments, that of the dangers of the lion. But the lions we shall meet will be vastly different in each Testament. One of the lions is imaginary and convenient while the other is real and ferocious.

## Discussion

### I. Imaginary Lions

#### A. Context of the Proverb: Proverbs 22:13

1. in the villages of olden times, occasionally word would come back from some traveler that a lion had been spotted somewhere out in the wilderness
2. apparently, that kind of report had come back to this man's village
  - a. for him, that was all too convenient
  - b. he was a lazy man who had no intention of doing his labor or his share
  - c. the only thing that kept him busy was the constant search for a new daily excuse to evade work
  - d. the occasion of this report of a lion out in the wilderness planted a seed in his feeble mind
    1. he cried out that he could not go out to work today for the lion might tear him apart in the streets
    2. it was a ridiculous excuse: the lion would not be so foolish as to wander into the village
    3. but for this lazy man, it bought him some time to think of something better
  3. this proverb wants to teach us something deeper than that, though
    - a. it teaches us about a lazy faith that is wearied by commands to be a doer and so searches high and low for some excuse to stay inside and rest
    - b. how many imaginary lions have we drawn in our own lives to keep us out of service and make us feel like it is a reasonable non-service?

#### B. Lion of Pessimism and Defeatism

1. we see this in older Christians more than anyone, I suppose
  - a. they remember a grander time when the church was large and vibrant and look at the church today and are discouraged
  - b. they begin to doubt the power of the gospel in their words of discouragement to others
  - c. they cease their labors in the Lord's vineyard because they don't believe they, or anyone, can possibly do any good
  - d. younger Christians hear this or see this and take their place on the sidelines as well
  - e. it becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy: our work does no good so let's not work at all: that certainly will do no good!
2. do we know better than the Lord?
  - a. he has told us to spread the gospel and yet we will tell him that we will not because he is wrong, the gospel is impotent
  - b. Austin is a godless city, no doubt, but there are thousands of religious people who have believed the lies of their false teachers
    1. some of these are your friends who would study with you if you would have the courage to ask
    2. they might even come to a gospel meeting if you would issue the invitation
    3. how many liberals do you know?
3. the lion of pessimism and defeatism is one that people create themselves and yet it can devour faith and a local church: Rev. 3:1-3 and Heb. 12:9-15

#### C. Lion of Rationalization

1. conversely, we see the lion of rationalization often in young people
2. they want to become Christians but are concerned about such a commitment at the same time they fear eternity and so they rationalize the decision away into oblivion
  - a. "I don't know enough yet."
  - b. "My friends will make fun of me."

- c. "My life has been so bad that everyone will think I'm becoming a Christian for ulterior motives."
  - d. "I have plenty of time."
  - e. "I'm not as bad as some people: at least I go to church."
  - f. "The preacher is preaching right at me: he's a big meanie."
  - g. "If I admit I've been wrong, people will look down on me."
3. these rationalizing lions have powerful teeth: if you allow them to frighten you away from Christ, everyone of them will tear you apart in judgment
- a. Saul of Tarsus could have conjured up any one of these lions
  - b. he had a reputation as a persecutor of the Way
  - c. Acts 22:6-16

#### D. Lion of The Least I Can Do

- 1. the local church is strengthened by people doing the most they can do and then some
  - a. those walking the required mile and then walking another for Jesus
  - b. those who do their part and then a little more strengthen the church
- 2. but the church is summarily weakened when so many spend their lives doing what they perceive to be the least they have to to be right
  - a. it is manifested in any number of ways but the most obvious is in worship attendance
  - b. some have decided that the least you can do and still get to heaven is show up on Sunday morning
    - 1. the preacher rambles on about Sunday night and Wednesday because he's the preacher: he has to say that: he doesn't really mean it!
    - 2. he talks about prayer and Bible study for the same reason: God's kingdom is composed of optional laws!
    - 3. the weekly appearance is all that God really requires: that's the least you have to do to get to heaven
- 3. when your attitude is to do the least you have to, you will always do too little: it's a delusion of the devil and it is powerful
  - a. Jesus said to go the extra mile (Matt. 5:41) but we are barely willing to walk the first
  - b. is the lion of the least you can do roaring in your mind

#### II. The Real Lion

- A. Stands Behind the Imaginary Ones: 1 Peter 5:8
  - 1. they are invented by man and yet have a certain power in stopping the Christian because a real lion gives them that power
  - 2. he is the devil and he is your adversary
- B. He Is Subtle
  - 1. the devil does not have to turn you into a bank robber or a mass murderer or even a fornicator to own your soul for eternity
  - 2. all he has to do is to get you to become disobedient to God in some way
    - a. it may be a way that you consider small and inconsequential
    - b. but the devil knows that it makes you a transgressor of God's law and if he can keep you doing it or keep you from repenting of it, he has you
  - 3. he is a subtle adversary who lurks about in the shadows ready to pounce
    - a. you see him in pornography and beer commercials and homosexuality
    - b. but he is also telling you to skip tiresome gospel meeting: optional!: to look out for number one first and foremost and to take pit stops in sin along the way
      - c. he is the one telling you that one sin is all right: God won't care: go ahead
      - d. but one sin is a transgression of your covenant with God: it is missing the mark
  - 4. the advances of humanism into the church since 1970 have been gradual and quiet and unnoticeable to most
    - a. but the church of Christ is filled with it
    - b. people who were once staunch: they were not compromisers or consensus builders at all: now bend

with the slightest touch

c. we gave up our resolve in the name of peace

1. but our peace is with man and not with God when we alter his will to fit ours and make it more convenient

2. woe unto those who cry, Peace, peace, when there is no peace.

### III. Conquering the Lion

#### A. Redeem the Time: Eph. 5:6-17

1. don't believe the lies of the lion

2. walk in light

3. prove what is acceptable to the Lord: more than an attitude of least I can do

4. walk with wisdom and circumspection

5. make the most of every moment and every day

6. understand God's will

#### B. Resist Him: 1 Peter 5:5-10

1. humble yourself under God's hand that exaltation may come for eternity rather than a passing season

2. cast your cares upon Him

3. walk circumspectly with sobriety and vigilance: he wants to eat you!

4. resist his enticements

#### C. Draw Near to God: James 4:7-10

1. imagine yourself in a middle point between God and the devil: which direction are you going to go?

2. repent of your sins

3. if you are sin or outside of Christ, it is a time to mourn and weep

a. our society says there is no time to mourn or weep but we should always have a positive mental attitude

b. no more positive words ever spoken: God will draw near to you if...

4. God will lift you up

### **Conclusion**

The imaginary lions are powerful but only as long as we allow them to hold sway over us and prevent us from walking in Christ and being doers of his will. The real lion can be overcome by diligence and commitment.



# Standing On The Other Side (Obadiah)

by J.S. Smith • delivered 19 March 1995 • Austin, Texas

## Introduction

i. Obadiah was called to prophesy following the sacking of Judah by Babylon in 586 B.C. It was not Babylon, nor was it Judah whom Obadiah was instructed to teach, but rather it was Edom, a brother nation to Judah. Edom had committed grave sins against its brother as Babylon invaded.

ii. The history between Edom and Judah goes all the way back to the book of Genesis and their predecessors, Jacob and Esau. The two brothers reconciled after their trouble with Father Isaac, but later generations continued to distrust each other. The events before Obadiah writes were too great to overlook and so we read God's rebuke.

iii. As we see Edom standing on the other side, we might think of occasions when Christians are guilty of the same thing. Remember that Edom did not instigate the fall of Judah but was still guilty because it stood on the other side.

iv. [Read Obadiah 10-15.]

## Discussion

### I. False Neutrality

#### A. There Is A Time For Neutrality: 1 Peter 4:15

1. in other people's matters, things that do not involve you, you are to remain outside
2. one of the worst mistakes that people make is to get in the middle of marital problems or family problems or friendship problems and take sides
3. that is no place for an outsider and when the problem is solved, often the one who entered into it is the only one unforgiven: Prov. 20:3
  - a. needless quarrels abound in the world, the home, even the church
  - b. many of these would be avoided if humility and wisdom prevailed

#### B. But Not When A Brother Is In Need

1. as Babylon attacked, Judah needed her help but instead, Edom claimed she must remain neutral
  - a. the "we don't want to get involved" attitude
  - b. many have this attitude about crime witnessing and so crime spreads
  - c. as Adolf Hitler was spreading his evil wings, many nations refused to act against him in the name of neutrality
  - d. Edom's neutrality was false, though: Obadiah said that when foreigners entered Judah's gates and cast lots for Jerusalem, Edom was as one of them
2. when we, as Christians, see a brother being overcome by the temptations of the devil, we should realize that there is a war being waged before us
  - a. the battle is between that brother or sister and the devil
  - b. we, as Edom, are obligated to come to the aid of our brother: Gal. 6:1-2
  - c. so often we opt to do nothing, wait and see, and in the eyes of the devil, we proclaim neutrality and set our brother on his own: . the new convert or the young college student
  - d. as a matter of preventative discipline, a child of God ought to expect rebuke and admonition
    1. when your son starts to run toward a busy street, do you remain neutral and allow it?
    2. of course not, you rebuke him, explaining the consequences and warning against future treks
    3. when a soul heads toward spiritual destruction, the warning cries of rebuke ought to be as loud as that of a parent when his child beats a path for traffic; neutrality will only multiply the corpses

#### C. Not When Truth is Attacked

1. we must take sides when the cause of Christ is questioned: Matt. 12:30
2. not as Pilate, whose cowardice led him to neutrality which is powerless: Matt. 27:22-24
3. false teachers are enemies of the truth and should be exposed and matched
  - a. yet I have so many brethren who will admit someone teaches falsely, but cannot call them a false teacher: sinful neutrality
  - b. so many brethren who print false teaching and yet will not answer it
  - c. we are so careful not to offend the false teacher while all the time hundreds of souls are falling

into the ditch by their lead

d. our neutrality in the war with false teaching will destroy the souls of our brethren: will we simply stand on the other side and await the tragedy

e. remember that the cowardly are numbered in Revelation 21 with those headed toward eternal damnation: there are real consequences to cowardly neutrality!

## II. Gazing On Tragedy

### A. Hope For Harm

1. no one delights in seeing his friends harmed, but when an enemy or someone of little concern is harmed, occasionally that becomes a spectacle to us

2. we feel satisfaction at the harm or tragedy that befalls someone else

3. in a society of rubberneckers and TV talk show addicts, is it any wonder that we consider human tragedy and suffering to be entertainment?

### B. Hatred of Enemies

1. there is a common temptation to wish evil and pain upon those with whom we do not get along

2. revenge is such a great temptation that God emphasizes that it is his arena and not man's

3. Jesus's teaching is overlooked in the same way that Edom looked spitefully upon Judah and was overjoyed when Babylon came to do battle: Matt. 5:38-47, Rom. 12:17-21

a. "He who is glad at calamity will not go unpunished" (Prov. 17:5).

b. "Do not rejoice when your enemy falls, And do not let your heart be glad when he stumbles" (Prov. 24:17).

### C. Malice

1. this attitude is the essence of the desire to gossip

2. when we are offended by a brother or see him sin, our first inclination is to whisper it to someone else and watch it spread like wildfire

a. instead, when offended, we should take it to that person in the spirit of Matthew 18

b. when we see someone sinning, we should point it out to them that they might repent

3. we will do that for a good friend, someone to whom we feel close, but to someone of lesser closeness, we will not; . to someone we dislike, it is gossip time

4. you are my friend when you tell me my sin or offense that I may correct it

a. you are not my friend when you tell everyone but me or when you listen to it

b. you are not my friend when you tell everyone before or after you tell me

## III. Selfishness

### A. Pride

1. it was pride that guided Edom, who dwelt in the safety of the cliffs of Samaria and looked down upon the vulnerability of Judah: Obadiah 3-4

2. some people react with pride at the downfall of others: "I wouldn't have succumbed to that."

### B. Opportunism

1. Edom did not start calamity in Judah, but took advantage of the situation to loot her brother

2. Edom waited to see which way the winds would blow; would have come down on either side

3. in controversies, unprincipled brethren abound and remain silent

### C. Sowing and Reaping

1. Edom was prophesied doom (Obad. 15)

2. Edom was herself invaded by Babylon five years later but not finally wiped out until 70 A.D.

3. man is prophesied the same doom if he reaps to the flesh in this way: Gal. 6:7-8

## Conclusion

Are we standing on the other side? Are we neutral? Or are we truly showing love to our brother?

# Shall We Dance?

by J.S. Smith • delivered 19 March 1995 • Austin, Texas

## Introduction

i. As we examine the decline of moral values in recent American history, we are bombarded with the tragedies of teenage pregnancy, drug use, sale and deaths; violence in our streets, even among eleven and twelve year olds; and the explosion of the population living unnecessarily on welfare. When we consider this sad state of affairs, a little thing like dancing hardly seems worth mentioning or fighting, for that matter. That is a mistake that the devil would love to see us make. He would love for us to get distracted and let down our guard. We will not!

## Discussion

### I. What Does the Book Say?

- A. Old Testament Instances of Dancing Are Often Cited In Support: Exod, 15:20-21 and 2 Sam. 6:12-16
  - 1. but note first that these dances were not normal practices
    - a. followed some extraordinary event
    - b. were done in broad daylight by men and women dancing separately in praise, not entertainment
    - c. not practiced by Jesus or his apostles or early Christians
  - 2. dances of worship in Old Testament times are not found under the New Testament system of worship and service
    - a. if dancing is acceptable because it is in the Old Testament, then instrumental music, incense burning and animal sacrifice also must be practiced
    - b. these dances were worship and the cry for dancing is not so that it might be done in worship, but for entertainment
    - c. the appeal to the Old Testament is insincere and misguided
- B. Lustful Modern Dancing
  - 1. these dances bear no resemblance to the lustful machinations of the modern dance: Mark 6:18-26
    - a. here is dancing similar in form to the modern dance with the usual result: lust
    - b. it was “opportune” day for the devil!
  - 2. if you have seen modern dancing on MTV or in person (God forbid!), you have seen the body movements and possibly even felt the effects of them
    - a. I danced before I became a Christian: I have first-hand experience in this matter
    - b. dancing causes lust, whether intentional or not, it is a stumbling block!
- C. New Testament Condemnation is Clear
  - 1. Galatians 5:19 condemns “licentiousness”
    - a. from Greek, *ασελγεια*, meaning “wanton acts or manners...indecent bodily movements, unchaste handling of males and females” (Thayer)
    - b. defined in English as something that stimulates sexual desire
    - c. as one who has engaged in this behavior and repented of it, I can affirm that modern dancing is all this
  - 2. it is therefore a stumbling block and is condemned by the Bible: Matthew 18:2-7 and James 1:12-16

### II. Why Then Do We Permit It?

- A. Seems Tame By Comparison
  - 1. in a society where our young are involved in drugs, uninhibited sex and rape, bloody crime and violence, dancing seems like nothing
  - 2. the devil wins when we devalue sin and permit it as a “less damaging” alternative to other sins
  - 3. some parents would rather know their kids are at the prom than fear they might be in a crack house or committing a car jacking
  - 4. this was not the attitude of parents two generations ago and before, though
    - a. our standards have retreated to allow us to permit dancing
    - b. in the early part of this century, no person of faith: even denominational: would hear of or watch dancing, let alone participate

- c. as they retreated, the church of Christ became known for remaining staunchly anti-dancing
5. whether imperiled by guns, drugs or lust, the child is still in danger: wake up!

#### B. Everybody Does It

1. I used to attempt to persuade my mother with this one all the time and it never worked
2. not everybody is dancing: Christians are not
  - a. the majority is dancing: and going to hell
  - b. be of the minority and go to heaven!

#### C. We Lack The Will to Refuse Our Kids

1. the daytime talk shows are filled with parents who are proud to announce that they allow their kids to have sex at home
  - a. we can't stop them
  - b. they're going to do it anyway
  - c. what of the three year old who wants to wander into the street to play, shall we let him: he's going to make it there eventually
2. the humanistic focus on self-esteem, popularity and feeling good has quietly dissuaded many parents from disciplining their children
  - a. in short, many parents lack the will or the conviction to say no to their children
  - b. some lack the moral authority: like my parents telling me not to smoke as they searched for a lighter

### III. What Do People Say?

#### A. Testimonials

1. "The difference between wrestling and dancing is that, in wrestling, some holds are barred" (Arthur Murray).
2. "Most juvenile crime has its inception in the dance hall, either public or private" (J. Edgar Hoover).
3. "Dancing is an exciting and pleasurable recreation as it affords a *partial* (emphasis mine, jss) satisfaction to the sex impulse" (Prof. Lita Hollingsworth, Columbia University).

#### B. Arguments for Dancing

1. "I only go to chaperoned dances, like the prom and other school functions."
  - a. the fact that dances need chaperones ought to tell you something
  - b. would chaperoned fornication render it harmless?
2. "Dancing is good exercise and is good for poise and grace."
  - a. if true, why not limit it to girls with girls and boys with boys?
  - b. if we did, we would soon find other methods of exercise!
3. "Going to the prom is required to be popular."
  - a. still, does it make it right; will this reason also cover smoking, drugs, drinking and sex?
  - b. if permitted, where will it stop?: it won't stop anywhere!
  - c. real friends will respect a Christian's refusal to dance

#### C. Is This Really a Big Deal?

1. are you planning to go to the prom this spring or allow your children or grandchildren to go or do nothing to stop someone you know?
2. don't be surprised if other sins soon follow
  - a. people who dance also may drink and drive
  - b. if they convince you to dance, can they convince you to fornicate or try marijuana?: Gal. 5:19-21
3. it is time to stop the slide of our standards and it starts today!

### Conclusion

# Suffering as a Christian

by J.S. Smith • delivered 26 March 1995 • Austin, Texas

## Introduction

- i. The word “Christian” is used only three times in the entire Bible. Words like “saint” or “brethren” are far more common than this. The three occasions in which this word is employed tell us much about what it takes to be like Jesus. In 1 Peter 4, the apostle is explaining to some saints why they are suffering at the hands of persecutors and what they should do to endure.
- ii. [Read 1 Peter 4:12-19.]

## Discussion

### I. Suffering Is Unavoidable For The Christian

#### A. A Simple Fact: Christians Must Suffer

1. “Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution” (2 Tim. 3:12).
  - a. if you are truly trying to live a godly life and practice the teachings of Jesus, you can count on suffering the barbs of persecutors
  - b. if you are merely going through the motions of Christianity: showing up every once in a while and keeping Jesus free from your mind, mouth and life the rest of the time, you will probably escape religious persecution; enjoy your respite now, though; suffering now prevents suffering forever
2. not strange occurrence when Christians suffer for their Master: 1 Peter 4:12
  - a. don't think it strange that you are suffering
  - b. all Christians are sharing in this suffering because their focus is on a heaven which strengthens them to persevere
3. indeed it should be a privilege to suffer on behalf of the one who died for your immortal soul (1 Peter 4:14): James 1:2-3

#### B. We Glorify Christ When We Are Willing To Suffer For Him

1. if you are scorned for being a Christian, blessed are you: God is truly with you
2. with their words and blows, they prove themselves evil blasphemers but on the other side is you, in humility glorifying Christ before them and the world
3. when someone makes fun of a Christian, he is not disturbed by that because he has put on Christ: darts of ridicule cannot penetrate his protection: the soul is safe

#### C. If You Are Not Suffering For Christ, Something is Wrong

1. if you are not hearing words of ridicule, do you wonder why not?
2. you are not offended by the offerings of the media, do you wonder why?
3. you do not feel tempted by Satan, do you wonder why you feel so strong?
4. could it be that no one knows you are a Christian because you never mention him or your faith or you simply do not act or talk like a Christian?
5. that you have become desensitized to the anti-religious venom and lewd excuses for news and entertainment bombarding you because you have imbibed it without a care for so long?
6. that you are overwhelmed by the sins of the devil and just don't pay attention to your downfall anymore?
7. the world would think that the time to worry would be when you are suffering, but in reality the time to worry is when you don't feel persecution at all!

### II. Suffering For Sinfulness Is Not Good

#### A. A Short Catalog of Sins

1. murder, theft, wickedness or busy-bodging
2. why these four?
  - a. perhaps they were prevalent among his audience
  - b. this list is certainly not exhaustive, however, when we consider all the New Testament
  - c. here are four sins we would consider of different degrees by man's standards and yet all four are to be ardently avoided by the Christian
  - d. suffering for these four is not honorable and will separate the soul from God eternally

## B. Suffering For Truth is Good

1. do not be ashamed...
  - a. if you are laughed at in school for your faith
  - b. do not be ashamed when co-workers give you a hard time because you won't go to the bar or the dance hall with them on Friday night
  - c. glorify God because you are led in paths of righteousness and not a flood of dissipation
2. fear not to defend the truth: Matthew 5:12 and 1 Peter 3:13-15

## C. Shame Your Accusers

1. those outside of Christ will be offended by your faith if they refuse to accept it as theirs too
2. they will try to catch you in hypocrisy and destroy your reputation: all in an attempt to bring you down to their level so that they do not feel so badly
  - a. sanctify God in your hearts with his word and will (1 Peter 3:15-17)
    1. always be ready to defend Christ and his testament to everyone who asks you why you behave the way you do
      - a. some envy your hope and may want to share it if you show them
      - b. others want to ridicule it but that hope will not be mocked
    2. maintain a good conscience, disciplined by God's word, not man's feelings
      - a. when they defame you as a wicked person and revile your conduct
      - b. they will be ashamed when they find no dirt under the rug
      - c. their audience will empathize with you and look down upon them because your life will be irreproachable
    4. you may have to suffer: it is better to suffer for righteousness among persecutors than evil among magistrates
      - b. let our light shine and redeem the time

## III. Persecutors Will Be Judged

### A. Judgment on The Ungodly and Disobedient

1. a question
  - a. "...what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God?"
  - b. answered with another question: "If the righteous one is scarcely saved, Where will the ungodly and the sinner appear?"
    - c. the answer to the second question here is a universal maxim: they will appear in hell
      1. the fact that the righteous are only saved with great difficulty: Christ's terrible sacrifice, all the temptations, the failures and repentance of life: the wicked surely don't stand a chance at all
      2. no room for backing into heaven accidentally!
    2. persecutors will be judged so don't concern yourselves with it: Rom. 12:17-21
      - a. when we seek to persecute our persecutors, our good is overcome by evil and evil merely doubles itself in the world
      - b. outsiders see what transpires and find the church no better than the world
      - c. what goes on in the church is no different from what goes on outside it
    3. judgment is unavoidable

### B. So You Commit Your Soul To Christ

1. 2 Timothy 1:12
2. God is a faithful creator; His promises are better than gold

## Conclusion

Will you commit your soul to Christ tonight if you have never done so? There is no reward in persecuting Christ but there is also no reward in walking through life without him.

# Chastity

by J.S. Smith • delivered 26 March 1995 • Austin, Texas

## Introduction

i. In I Thessalonians 4, Paul takes up an important threat to the soul of a Christian, the temptation to engage in fornication. It is a subject frequently noted in the Bible: much more frequently than we consider it together. In your home study, you surely run across it often. Today, we will study the detailed wisdom that Paul offers in remaining chaste.

## Discussion

### I. Sexual Immorality

#### A. Sex is Good

1. intercourse is the way by which God continues the life cycle among his creation, humanity:  
Genesis 1:27-28b
2. without sex, man would have died out with Adam and Eve
3. it is God's will that man and woman have sexual intercourse
4. in its ideal condition as God demands, sex is beautiful and an expression of godliness

#### B. Sex is Not Always Good

1. as with most of God's commands, man eventually decides to stretch the law to see how far it will bend without breaking
  - a. in Old Testament times, incest was first committed and then adultery and homosexuality and bestiality and polygamy
  - b. God's regulation of marriage was rejected by man and those guilty were punished
2. Old Testament laws were clear ordinances
  - a. Leviticus 18 is dedicated to God's regulation of intercourse: Lev. 18:2-5
  - b. incest is condemned (verses 6-18)
  - c. intercourse during "customary impurity" is condemned (verse 19)
  - d. adultery is condemned (verse 20)
  - e. homosexuality is condemned (verse 22)
  - f. bestiality is condemned (verse 23)
3. the New Testament rededicated these regulations of intercourse
  - a. adultery (or fornication) was repeatedly condemned by Jesus and Paul over and over again
  - b. homosexuality is unequivocally outlawed by Paul (Romans 1 and 1 Cor. 6)
4. regulation of sex is a subject one cannot miss, ignore or deny in the Bible

### II. Chastity Is Your Sanctification

#### A. Paul's Treatise on Fornication: 1 Thess. 4:1-8

1. an exhortation from Jesus through Paul that Christians should be growing in dedication to Jesus by walking in his will and pleasing God
2. these are commandments given by authority of the Son of God; denying them is denying Him
3. this discussion is the will of God; it is one way in which you show yourself to be set apart from the world: sanctified amidst an impure world; you should abstain from sexual immorality
  - a. in the raging debate about sex education in public schools, God weighs in here with his will for school children and everyone else
  - b. abstinence: guaranteed 100% effective every time it is tried against disease, unwanted pregnancy and sin
4. each verse from 4 to 8 gives a new detail or point in abstinence

#### B. Verse 4: Possess Your Vessel in Sanctification and Honor

1. the word rendered "vessel" here is Greek κύβητος which probably means "body"
  - a. some submit that it means "wife," pointing to 1 Peter 3 as proof
  - b. that is a possibility; neither meaning is antagonistic to the other
  - c. my study has led me to believe that "body" is the better translation
    1. if it means "wife," then only married men are bound by this command

2. as “body” both men and women, married or unmarried are included
2. Paul’s admonition is to keep the body simply free of sexual impurity
3. he taught this to the Corinthians in 1 Cor. 6:15-20
  - a. the body is a gift from God
  - b. as a Christian, we join ourselves to Jesus; shall we then also join ourselves at the same time to someone in fornication?
    - c. *Flee* sexual immorality: when the temptation presents itself, it is time to be somewhere else
    - d. sexual immorality of any flavor is a sin against God’s gift, the temple of the holy spirit
    - e. your body and spirit belong to God, you steward them, but they are His!
    - f. glorify God with them, do not shame Him!

#### C. Verse 5: Do Not Act Out Of Lust

1. lust from Greek  $\mu$  meaning “desire for what is forbidden” (Thayer)
2. fornication is a common vice among those outside of Christ but it is and should be entirely infrequent among Christians
  - a. homosexuality and bestiality are less common perversions of sex
  - b. the heathen of Paul’s day even incorporated orgies into their idol worship
  - c. they took their goddess Venus, known for uninhibited sex and nicknamed her the “goddess of love”, but she was about sexual immorality, not love
3. as Christians, we know God
  - a. we are His children, taught and disciplined by will and word
  - b. we know God’s will when it comes to sex
  - c. we are an embarrassment when we do differently; we mimic the world around us instead of following Jesus
    - d. the message is plain: you know better and you are better than that!
    - e. slipping into fornication is a prime symptom of worldliness (1 John 2)

#### D. Verse 6: Do Not Defraud Your Brother In This Matter

1. the tenth commandment, Exodus 20:17 is revived in the New Law by Jesus and amplified here by his apostle
2. you are probably looking at this admonition and thinking when could that ever happen?
  - a. sadly, I know of occasions when it has happened and it has ripped local churches apart at the seams
  - b. suffice it to say that stealing your brother’s wife or your sister’s husband is not the will of God
3. the consequences are God’s vengeance, and our God is a consuming fire (Heb. 12:29)

#### E. Verse 7: God’s Call

1. God did not call us out of a sinful life through the preaching of the gospel to continue in the sins we are partial to
  - a. there are plenty of sinful pleasures to give up
  - b. with very many, sexual immorality is one of them
2. God’s gospel call is not “Come as you are; stay as you are.”
  - a. it is about conversion: from a child of the devil to a child of God
  - b. fornication is of the devil and God did not call us to that, but from that: 1 Peter 1:13-16

#### F. Verse 8: Rejection Not of Man, But of God

1. some in Paul’s day were disposed to reject commands they disliked by saying they were his opinion and not the will of God
  - a. many in our day like to reject the epistles by making a gospel/doctrine distinction in which only the words of Christ in the four gospel accounts matter and all this is just filler to make the New Testament comparable in length to the Old Testament
  - b. Paul says think again and this verse, like all others, was inspired by God
2. if you choose to reject this command, you are not disobeying the man, Paul, nor are you disobeying the preacher who quotes him
3. it is plainly God whom you despise and refuse

### III. A Sin To Take Seriously

#### A. The Sex Drive Is Strong

1. God gave men and women a sex drive that they might be inclined to procreate and continue humanity's existence

2. but God has specified how that urge is to be satisfied: marital sex (Heb. 13:4)

3. temptations and inducements to satisfy it outside of marriage should be respected (feared)

#### B. Avoid Temptations

1. Paul knew what he was talking about when he said to flee sexual immorality in 1 Cor. 6

2. flee...

a. pornographic magazines, even the *Sports Illustrated* swimsuit issue

b. beaches, water parks and public pools where mixed bathing goes on

c. movies with sexually explicit scenes

d. acquaintances who talk and brag about sexual experiences and wonder why you don't run with them in the same flood of dissipation

### **Conclusion**

Will we flee sexual immorality or flirt with it?



# God Will Provide...Spiritually

by J.S. Smith • delivered 9 April 1995 • Austin, Texas

- i. God is watching over his children and will provide them with the means to attain their physical needs. But in comparison to our spiritual needs, those are as nothing, things to perish with use. Our God is not willing that any should perish in eternal hellfire but desires that all come to a knowledge of his provision, to repentance and to salvation thereby.
- ii. After the fall of man in the garden, sin was an obstacle between man and God. But God was ready to provide a way back: Gen. 3:14-15.
- iii. This was all foreshadowed early in the Biblical record in the persons of Abraham and Isaac.

## Discussion

### I. Isaac, An Obedient Offering

#### A. The Command: Gen. 22:1-2

1. Abraham and Sarah had waited many years for this child and against all human odds, Isaac had been born

a. he was more than the child of promise to this godly couple, though

b. Isaac was the child of promise that would lead to God's grace being poured out on all mankind

2. the command to Abraham might have sounded like pure foolishness, but his faith taught him that God could provide and that God knew best

a. Isaac was to be offered: given up in service to God's will

b. yet, Abraham's faith will not allow him to utter a word of "Not so, Lord."

#### B. The Obedience: Gen. 22:3-8

1. no doubt about Abraham

a. he arose early in the morning

b. did exactly as God specified

2. Isaac was to carry the wood that would eventually terminate his life

3. poor Isaac wonders aloud, "Where is the lamb?"

4. Abraham responds, "God will provide the lamb for the offering."

#### C. God Provides: Gen. 22:9-14

1. Abraham was prepared to offer his only begotten son, hard as it was, because it was God's will: it was the only way: Heb. 11:17-19

2. the angel of the Lord intervenes when Abraham has proven his faith to himself and to God

a. God provides a ram in the place that Abraham names "YHWH Jireh," The- Lord-Will-Provide

b. in the Mount of the Lord, it shall be provided

3. but this provision was a blessing to all mankind: Gen. 22:15-18

a. all will be blessed

b. because Abraham obeyed God

### II. Jesus, A Better Offering

#### A. Prophesied: Isaiah 53:4-7, 10-12

1. here is the one who would do nothing sinful or wrong and yet be punished

2. here is the one who would willingly go to the cross without a word of "Not so, Lord."

3. here is the Father's only begotten Son who would be led as a lamb to slaughter without a peep

4. his souls would be an offering, though he needed none for himself, it would be an offering for sin

5. his act would lead many to know him and be justified by Him

6. here is one who would bear the wood that would take his life and become an offering in service to God

God

#### B. Fulfilled: Luke 23:33-46

1. John tells us that Jesus carried his own cross at least part of the way

2. when they arrived at a hill called Mount Calvary, they crucified him with a pair of true criminals

3. the rulers and the people looked on and sneered that he is a fraud
  - a. Isaac had been spared as he was about to be offered
  - b. if Jesus truly is the son of God, they reasoned, God would spare him, too
4. God did not spare his only son, though
  - a. Abraham had been faithful when he was willing to offer his only begotten son
  - b. God was also faithful to his words of prophesy that his only son would be offered

C. Reflected: Hebrews 10:1-18

1. Isaac had wondered where the Lamb was Abraham would offer
2. in the long run, God provided his own son as the lamb of offering: 1 John 4:9-10 and Rom. 3:21-26
  - a. we all sin and God will not pass over our sins in the day of judgment
  - b. Jesus was offered that our sins might be forgiven
  - c. but we must live a life of faith to be justified

**Conclusion**

God has provided spiritually for us as he has physically. He will not force feed us food nor will he force feed us forgiveness. We must seek them by the means he has given. And God is a rewarder of those who diligently seek him.

# God Will Provide...Physically

by J.S. Smith • delivered 9 April 1995 • Austin, Texas

## Introduction

i. This is a subject that touches our lives every single day and yet most days go by with few thoughts upon it. God will provide: that is a wonderful promise, a wonderful blessing and we would do well to recognize it.

ii. Jesus taught his disciples this on the mount: Matthew 6:24-34

## Discussion

### I. God Is Watching Over You

#### A. His Care For Creation

##### 1. God is watching his creation

a. he sees the birds and the needs they have to live

b. they are not able to sow seed or reap in the fields, nor can they gather a harvest into a barn, but

God is watching and cares for them

##### 2. man is able to do all that but he has an inability just like those birds do

a. man cannot create rain for the fields or sunlight to foster growth

b. but God is watching and provides all those things (James 1:17)

##### 3. God does not turn the birds over, pry open their mouths and feed them

a. they must find the worms for food and the twigs for nests

b. what they can do, they must

4. God will not turn a man over, pry open his mouth, and feed him; he must help himself and take hold of what God has provided, he must do what he can

##### 5. God's care for man extends even further than physical needs

a. because man is alone in being gifted with a soul; God has provided for man's spiritual need

b. and yet, even in spiritual things, God will not force Him to be saved

#### B. He Hears The Prayers of the Righteous

1. don't let anyone tell you that prayer is powerless: James 5:16

2. we must ask in faith, believing that God can: James 1:6, 4:3

3. God hears those who believe and obey, but not unrepentant: John 9:31

#### C. God Will Provide

##### 1. science tells us that man has three basic physical needs

a. they are food, clothing and shelter

b. these are deemed so necessary that human life cannot survive without

1. without food sustaining the body, it will wither and die

2. without clothing, the body is unprotected against extreme heat or Col. d and will be destroyed

3. without shelter, the elements of nature cannot be defended against

##### 2. God is the creator of all things and he knows this and provides the means to attain them all

a. will he force feed you or build a house around your motionless body: no

b. will God ensure that the means to attain are present: yes!

### II. How God Provides

#### A. Work

1. after the fall, man was sent to work to provide for himself because God would not outside garden

2. truly God provides and so well especially in our country

a. independently or employed by another, the means are there

b. opportunities to partake of God's blessings are everywhere

3. God is providing through work

4. some able-bodied people refuse to accept God's blessing by the sweat of his brow and instead expect someone else to provide for him

a. God speaks, though; such welfare programs for the able-bodied are not compassionate or the will of God: 2 Thess. 3:7-12

- b. laziness is unacceptable to God; as a matter of fact, it is grounds for withdrawal in the church

## B. Family

- 1. the family is an institution created by God and regulated by him
  - a. fleshly family is most basic unit on earth and part of society's backbone
  - b. we see what happens when family is discarded in society
- 2. a person who is unable to provide for himself: disabled, elderly, etc.: should find relief from his relatives: 1 Timothy 5:8
  - a. this is God's will and it is not something we can discard
  - b. no one in my family will wander the streets in hunger and homelessness unwillfully with my knowledge: God will not allow me to do that; God is providing through the bond of the family

## C. Individual Benevolence Toward Non-family

- 1. basics of being Christ-like: humility, selflessness and brotherly concern
  - a. "But do not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well-pleased" (Heb. 13:16).
    - b. commands were made often to the wealthy to overcome the pitfalls of riches and show generosity to the less fortunate: 1 Timothy 6:17-19
  - 2. when one is unable to provide for himself: not unwilling, but unable: and his family cannot help, then other individuals are obligated to help
    - a. "If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you says to them, "Depart in peace, be warmed and filled," but you do not give them the things which are needed, for the body, what does it profit?" (James 2:15-17)
    - b. "But whoever has this world's goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him?" (1 John 3:17): James 1:27

## D. As A Last Resort, Church Benevolence

- 1. in a situation that would have to be characterized as rare and extreme, someone who is unable to provide for himself, has no family that can help him and is in a church of individuals who are financially unable to help, the church is the last resort to keep that person from starving
  - 2. it is extremely rare that this last resort comes up; but it takes selflessness and brotherly love

## III. What You Might Miss

### A. How God Will Provide

- 1. some read that God promises to provide and sit back, put their feet up and say bring it on, Lord
- 2. while God has promised to provide, the first step in acceptance is work
- 3. he uses this means and these others to provide; God does not force feed man

### B. God Has Not Promised to Fulfill Our Every Want

- 1. wants, desires, luxuries are not part of God's promise
  - a. they may come: usually do upon all, in different degrees, but upon all
  - b. everyone in this house can go home to a house or an apartment or a dormitory and see more than just their needs supplied
- 2. but when we don't receive these wants, we should not cry that God is not providing as he said he would
  - a. he has never promised to make Christians wealthy
  - b. some must voluntarily become poor to serve him (e.g., Paul, the rich young ruler and Zacchaeus)

### C. Count Your Blessings

- 1. take an inventory every day of God's blessings
- 2. express your gratitude: Heb. 13:15

## Conclusion

# Walls Come Tumbling Down

by J.S. Smith • delivered 16 April 1995 • Austin, Texas

## Introduction

- i. The New Testament writers taught many lessons based upon something that their readers were well acquainted with. Fortunately, it is something we, too, know: the Old Testament. But if we fail to study the analogies that the writers make to the OT, we may miss the lesson altogether and fail to know what God has shown.
- ii. [Read Heb. 11:1-3, 30-31, 12:1-2).

## Discussion

### I. Sacking Jericho By Faith (Joshua 1-6)

#### A. Go With God (Chapter 1)

1. it is time to take the land of promise (Joshua 1:1-2)
2. still, even after all Israel had endured and survived, still they are required and reminded to teach, study and live the law of God; God will be with them *if* they are obedient: Joshua 1:7-9
3. the people were instructed to gather provisions for battle and readied themselves with confidence and courage: Joshua 1:16-18

#### B. Rahab Hides the Spies (Chapter 2)

1. Joshua sent spies into the land first to discover the best strategy for his invasion: they came to the house of a harlot named Rahab: Joshua 2:2-7
2. Rahab, a stranger to Jehovah and Israel, has heard of all that Jehovah has done and she believes: she has seen nothing, but has heard the news about God and now she believes and has opportunity to bow before him: Joshua 2:8-11
3. she knows that God's will shall be done: even though that means the destruction of her home and city and so she seeks Jehovah to avoid disaster upon herself: Joshua 2:12--16
4. salvation for Rahab was conditional, though; she has already shown faith and confessed belief: Joshua 2:17-21
5. the spies told Joshua of the good prospects for invasion and of Rahab

#### C. Preparing the Next Generation (Chapter 3-5)

1. now it was time to begin the journey en masse into the land of Jericho
  - a. it was also God's opportunity to show the people that God was with Joshua as he had been with Moses: Joshua 3:7, 13
  - b. the people crossed over on dry land as they obeyed all God's conditions: Joshua 4:4-7, 14
2. the old generation had passed away and a new one had arisen
  - a. before the battle was joined, God commanded that they pause to comply with His command of circumcision
  - b. this was not an unimportant rite, nor simply an outward exhibition of obedience: it was obedience itself and law itself
  - c. it was important enough to ensure that it was done

#### D. Taking Jericho (Chapter 6)

1. the city is well fortified and protected, but God says it is as good as fallen: Joshua 6:1-2
2. but would you believe its defeat is conditional?: Joshua 6:3-5
3. Joshua led God's people in the strategy and conditions the Lord specified
  - a. they had done part of God's command, not all: Joshua 6:12-14
  - b. finally, they completed all God had said: Joshua 6:15-16, 20-21a

#### E. Sparing Rahab (Chapter 6)

1. just before Joshua had given the word to begin the invasion, he warned the people to spare Rahab: Joshua 6:17
  - a. but in all this commotion, how could the warriors possibly pick out her house from all of the houses in the city?

- b. she had obeyed the conditions of the scarlet cord and was found in her house, not outside
  - c. had she failed to tie the cord in her window, the warriors would not have recognized it and would have burned it
2. had she ventured out of her house to watch the war or try to flee, she would have been apprehended and killed: Joshua 6:22-23

## II. By Faith: Hebrews 11:30-31

### A. Go With God

- 1. when one studies God's word and finds himself in error, he must choose to either obey God or reject the Lord in favor of himself
- 2. if you go with God, you can do so confidently
  - a. confident you are not guessing about God's approval but are assured of it
  - b. confident that God is with you in what you do: John 4:23-24, (cf. Matt. 15:8-9)

### B. When Your Heart Melts

- 1. for a heart to melt, it has to have been frozen or hardened previously
  - a. Rahab's heart was hard against God until she heard the news about what Jehovah was accomplishing
  - b. her heart melted and she desired to be known of God and submit to him
- 2. same thing in Acts 2:22-24, 36-37
  - a. so wonderful to study with people who later decide to obey the gospel, to watch hearts melt
  - b. the gospel is powerful and important

### C. Pass It On

- 1. faith is so necessary to life that it ought to be passed on from parent to child
  - a. in Joshua's day, they set up a memorial
  - b. that their children might learn what God had done so that they might fear God forever (Josh. 4:24)
- 2. we all remember Paul lauding Timothy's mother and grandmother for teaching him the scriptures and passing on their faith to him when he was but a child (2 Tim. 1:5)
  - a. it is so wonderful for me to listen to my wife talking about her class with Sarah on Wednesday night
    - b. she looks forward to it as much as Sarah does
    - c. my wife is encouraged by the desire she has to know God's word
- 3. young children are hungry for this knowledge
  - a. we should pass it on
  - b. cause it to be remembered in our homes (Eph. 6:4)
- 4. this will prepare them to make decisions based upon their belief in God and their faith in what he has promised
  - a. it is the type of preparation that leads young men and women to God with an anchor that can not be unsettled
  - b. it is the type of faith that breaks down walls: Eph. 2:14-18

### D. Walls of Jericho Fell By Faith

- 1. Hebrews tells us that the walls fell by faith
- 2. in Jericho, God promised success
  - a. he told them that despite the odds against it, they would prevail if they obeyed his conditions
    - 1. I wonder if this sounded strange or unnecessary to the soldiers
    - 2. why waste time blowing a trumpet and tire ourselves out marching around in circles all week?
    - 3. why not conserve energy, preserve element of surprise: attack now!
  - b. but they obeyed commands and did not pause to argue that it just doesn't seem that important
  - c. victory is not in the shouting and trumpeting, they could have reasoned, not in an outward expression of faith, but in the faith only
  - d. but they didn't: they just obeyed because the command was clear
- 3. when did the walls fall by faith?

- a. check the chronology
- b. did the walls fall before they marched and shouted or after?
- c. the order is obvious: command: obedience: success

#### E. Rahab Saved By Faith

1. Hebrews tells us likewise that Rahab was saved by faith
2. the spies also told her she would be saved but their were conditions
  - a. if she submitted to them, she would be saved
  - b. if she did not, she would be killed like all others
3. Rahab could have reasoned the conditions were silly after all she had done, believing in a God she had never even seen
  - a. tying a cord in my window: there is no salvation in a piece of thread
  - b. but she did not, she obeyed gladly what was clearly commanded
4. would Rahab have been saved if she had not done as the spies said?
  - a. had she failed to tie the cord in her window, the warriors would not have recognized it and would have burned it
  - b. had she ventured out of her house to watch the war or try to flee, she would have been apprehended and killed

### III. Saved By Faith

#### A. Bible Teaches Salvation By Faith

1. when Paul and Silas preached to the Philippian jailer's household, the question eventually was raised by the jailer: Acts 16:30
2. Peter's answer says faith is required: Acts 16:31

#### B. Bible Also Obedience Must Be rendered to the Gospel

1. no more difficult than what Joshua and Rahab faced: 1 Pet. 4:17-19, (2 Thess. 1:7-9, Rom. 10:15-18)
2. Jesus said he who not only believes but is baptized will be saved in Mark 16:15-16
  - a. shall we reason that baptism is silly or only an outward exhibition of an already attained salvation or that there is no salvation in that water?
  - b. or shall we simply realize the command is clear and gladly submit to it?
3. Peter made it extremely clear for the rest of history
  - a. the question: Acts 2:37
  - b. Acts 2:38 (Greek word, εις, means in or unto)

μετανοησατε, και βαπτισθητω εκαστος υμων επι τω  
Repent and let every one of you be baptized in the

νοματι Ιησου Χριστου εις αφεσιν των αμαρτιων υμων...  
name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins...

1. used to describe a man entering a town or a house
2. used here to signify entering into forgiveness: how? baptism!

#### C. When Conditions Are Met

1. preached Jesus to him: Acts 8:35
2. his words led him to ask the great question: Acts 8:36
3. Philip's answer makes clear the importance of obeying the conditions and commands of God: Acts 8:37-38
4. no salvation outside of Christ (John 14:6): Gal. 3:26-27

### Conclusion

Will you follow these examples of faith into God's mercy?



# God's Dress Code

by J.S. Smith • delivered 16 April 1995 • Austin, Texas

## Introduction

i. I have billed this lesson as “Every April, whether you want it or not.” I don’t mean to be presumptuous or overbearing, but a survey of society and the church surely leads us to conclude that more consideration of this topic is required rather than less. The streets of Austin are filled with naked people walking around by bible standards: the devil is thrilled and God is shamed. But the church is also creeping toward iniquity here also.

## Discussion

### I. Nakedness?

#### A. Two Kinds of Nakedness Defined By Context

1. in strictest sense, naked means completely unclothed; nude
2. but in a partial sense, naked may describe inadequately clothes or incompletely covered
3. from Hebrew, *erya* and Greek, *μ* *s*
  - a. “unclad, without clothing” (Thayer, 122)
  - b. “ill clad” or “clad in the undergarment only” (Thayer, 122)
4. context will show whether completely or partially unclothed is intended
5. but note that the Bible will condemn inadequate clothing!

#### B. In The Strictest Sense: Completely Unclothed

1. “They were both naked, the man and his wife” (Gen. 2:25).
2. “Noah was uncovered” and Ham “saw the nakedness of his father” (Gen. 9:21-23).
3. John Mark had only “a linen cloth cast about his naked body (Mark 14:51-52).” His nightclothes were covering his body, otherwise unclothed.
4. Luke 8:27, 35 shows the contrast and the implication

#### C. Inadequately or Incompletely Clothed

1. God told Isaiah in Isa. 20:2-3 to remove his sackcloth and sandals and when he had done so, he is described as being naked
  - a. Peter is described in the KJV as naked when he had only removed his outer garment
  - b. James 2:15 commands us to clothe a brother or sister who comes to us naked: we don’t have to wait until their last sock is lost before helping them!
2. partial nakedness exposes one to moral shame and disgrace
  - a. he wasn’t totally naked! but naked enough to be embarrassed: Gen. 3:7-10
  - b. Exod. 20:26 tells us that no steps could be built on God’s altar because climbing them in the fashions of the day would expose one’s nakedness: his thighs (Exod. 28:42)
  - c. Isa. 47:2-3: uncovered thigh is equated with nakedness and shame and God’s vengeance
3. nakedness as moral shame is found from Gen. (3:7) through Revelation (3:17, 16:15 and 17:16)
  - a. nakedness must be covered
  - b. it is not merely a matter of culture or custom, but transcends different cultures and generations through the Bible
  - c. it is a standard recognized by holy women in all ages (1 Peter 3:5).
4. illustrate the senselessness of the situation

### II. God's Dress Code

#### A. Demeanor and Dress of Godly Women in General: 1 Peter 3:1-6

1. read carefully, some will say this says nothing about modest attire
  - a. but, women are to conduct themselves chastely: “pure from every fault...pure from carnality, modest (Vine)
  - b. it should be accompanied by fear: “respect for authority”
  - c. she should be meek, accepting God’s will without rebellion
  - d. she should be quiet, not disturbing or enticing others with bold clothing
  - e. she should be holy, set aside to God from sin

2. her attire should reflect a godly spirit free of any carnal display of skin
  - a. even in the first century, some women's clothing clung to her figure and left little to the imagination
  - b. first century secular writer Seneca said, "I see clothes of silk, if clothes they can be called, affording protection neither to the body nor to the modesty of the wearer, and which are purchased for enormous sums."
  - c. Pliny wrote of garments that "render women naked."
  - d. others told of clothes "made of glass"
3. when we see dresses or other clothes that expose the thighs or more, it is not tempered by 1 Peter 3 but rather mimicking indecency of clothes that render her naked

#### B. Godly Demeanor and Dress in Worship: 1 Timothy 2:9-10

1. what does this say about decent dress?
  - a. modesty: "orderly, well-arranged, decent" (Vine)
  - b. propriety or shamefacedness: "a sense of shame, modesty" (Vine)
  - c. sobriety: "sound judgment" (Thayer)
  - d. godliness: "fear or respect for God" (Vine)
2. dress must reflect these qualities
  - a. does the miniskirt reflect decency?
  - b. do short shorts reflect a sense of shame?
  - c. does transparent clothing that attracts the leers of young men show sound judgment?
  - d. does it show godliness?
3. nakedness (even partial, only thighs for example) is shameful

#### C. Why Do Most Passages Point Directly At Women?

1. *Psychology Today* did a survey on why men and women go to the beach (December 1982, p. 10)
  - a. 69% of men go to see women in bathing suits
  - b. only 7% of women go to see men
  - c. the greatest danger has traditionally been in women enticing men and men falling to lust
2. but these principles of the Bible must be applied to both genders
  - a. Adam was described as nude, partially clothed and properly clothed also
  - b. some women, sadly a growing number, express a danger of lustful temptation (Diet Coke commercial with Lucky Vanous)
  - c. there is the danger of men causing other men to stumble as homosexuality is chosen by more men
  - d. the Bible is not a double standard
    1. a radical women's group decided that since men are permitted culturally to bare their chests in public, women should be, too
    2. they may have a point, but it's not the right one
    3. last year, at least one woman took advantage of a weird court decision and rode the New York subway topless
    4. in reality, no one should go topless in public

### III. Compromise

#### A. Arguments for Compromise

1. we must adhere to fashion standards to be popular: miniskirts, shorts and bathing suits are "in" and so we must wear them or risk losing our popularity
  - a. what about losing your soul, where does that fit in?
  - b. what about causing others to stumble?
2. in our hot climate, shorts are necessary for comfort
  - a. is your comfort worth more than your soul?
  - b. how would you compare modest clothes in today's heat with eternity in hellfire?
  - c. no one is more hot-natured than I am (this fan runs through winter)

#### B. Creeping Trend Toward a Worldly Church

1. shorts, once forbidden, are now permissible and getting shorter year by year

2. the truth has been compromised on issues of morality and no one is willing to cry, "Cease!"
  - a. mixed swimming is not only acceptable to many Christians, but some are sponsoring mixed swim parties at their homes for their children and friends and parents
  - b. not much is said about a Christian girl becoming a majorette or cheerleader or joining the dance line: have you seen what they wear?
  - c. Rubel Shelley, institutionalist, calls these matters "trivial": Job 31:1, 8-12
3. some are tempted as summer approaches to wear abbreviated clothing to worship services
  - a. I was once called on a Sunday morning and asked by a Christian traveling in the area if there would be a problem with her coming to services in shorts
  - b. I said, Yes!"
  - c. Is there a problem coming to services naked and endangering young men's souls?

### C. What Is The Standard?

1. some have asked me to define what is acceptable
  - a. the Bible does not specify hem lengths or percentages of flesh exposed
  - b. will you at least agree to stay away from questionable clothing
2. the scriptures presented today lead us to turn away from wearing:
  - a. shorts that expose the thigh, that is end above the knee
  - b. dresses with a hemline above the knee when sitting
  - c. dresses slit to expose the upper part of the leg
  - d. clothing that is tight enough to show undergarments or intended to accentuate curves of the figure
  - e. dresses and blouses with low cut necklines
  - f. halter tops which hug the body and leave nothing to the imagination
  - g. transparent clothing
  - h. modern day swimsuits (those of 80 years ago were more fabric than a man's suit of today)
  - i. toplessness of men or women in public

### Conclusion

The creeping trend toward a worldly church needs to stop and it needs to begin with you. Will you take a stand for Christ? Will you endure the heat now to avoid it in eternity?



# Zeal For Your House

by J.S. Smith • delivered 23 April 1995 • Austin, Texas

## Introduction

i. I recently read a book about how religious people are beginning to enter political arenas again after decades of self-imposed exile. The book reflected warmly upon a time when religious people were everywhere in government: it was a time when a new gospel was gaining numerous adherents. The name of the new gospel in this era was “The Social Gospel.” I was taken off guard by the author’s devotion to the social gospel and saddened by his commitment to it.

## Discussion

### I. What Did Jesus Build?

#### A. Was Jesus An “Anti-”? John 2:13-17

1. why did Jesus do what he did here; it almost seems out of character
2. was Jesus “anti-money changer” or “anti-dove merchant”?
3. or could it be that he was simply opposed to the perversion of spiritual things at the temple: the commonizing of uncommon things?
4. Paul bore record of these material minded people: Rom. 10:1-3
  - a. in their zeal, they had made God’s house one of merchandise rather than worship
  - b. their zeal was separate from knowledge and that is a dangerous combination
  - c. failure to understand God’s express will makes it possible to pervert the work and worship of the church Jesus built: i.e., to change the music and supper
3. in light of this, consider religious groups of today
  - a. upon entering most meeting houses in this city, Jesus could most likely make a whip of cords and drive out people running bake sales and concerts
  - b. he could overturn coffee pots, break up stoves and refrigerators, exclaiming “Take these things away!”
  - c. his rebuke, now in the church and not the temple, would be “Make not my Father’s house a fast food restaurant and gymnasium.”“ 2 Timothy 3:1-7
    1. in many churches today, these are perilous times, filled with men who are lovers of themselves and of pleasure rather than lovers of God
    2. they are always learning but never able to come to a knowledge of truth

#### B. Jesus Promised to Build His Church (Matthew 16:16-18)

1. *church* is a collective noun (like *flock* or *group*)
  - a. a collection of people redeemed by the blood of Christ and put together as stones into a spiritual building (1 Peter 2:5) or members into a spiritual body (1 Cor. 12:12)
  - b. in a local sense (and the only sense in which the church is organized to work) the church consists of members who have banded together to do the work which God gave the church to do (1 Cor. 1:2; Rom. 16:16)
2. what is the mission of the church?
  - a. the church is authorized to support the preaching of the gospel, only the gospel, and nothing but the gospel (Phil. 1:5; 2 Cor. 11:8): you cannot find any authority in the Lord’s book for the local church to preach or teach something else
  - b. the church is authorized to edify itself
    1. in the New Testament, this procedure always involves offering its members spiritual instruction (Eph. 4:12; 1 Cor. 14:26)
    2. you cannot find any authority in the Lord’s book for any other type of edification (i.e. something other than or in addition to spiritual)
  - c. church is authorized to aid saints in need (Acts 4:32,34,35; 11:27-30; Rom. 15:25-32; 2 Cor. 8-9)
  - d. you cannot find any authority in the Lord’s book for the local church to be involved in general benevolence

### II. Fellowship

#### A. How is *Fellowship* Used in the New Testament?

1. in New Testament, the word *fellowship* is used in a special sense (like baptism, apostle, church)
2. as far as the church is concerned, always refers to things we share in Christ due to our spiritual relationship with Him and one another
3. we share Christ and therefore have:
  - a. common salvation (Jude 3)
  - b. common faith (Titus 1:4)
  - c. common nature (2 Peter 1:4)
  - d. common blessings (Eph. 1:3-12)
  - e. common responsibilities (Phil. 4:5)

#### B. How Is It Used In “Different Gospel” Churches

1. “Do you have a fellowship hall?”
  - a. Oh yes, we do.
  - b. “Do you have basketball goals in it?”
  - c. No.
  - d. “Table tennis?...Dining facilities?...Arts and crafts?”
  - e. No.
  - f. “What do you have in it?”
  - g. Bibles, hymnbooks, pews...anything that will help us do the work and worship as God has instructed! We don’t have anything that helps us do things God has not authorized.
2. a redefining of Biblical fellowship has taken place so church involvement in social areas can be justified
  - a. sharing doughnuts and coffee is not *fellowship* but sharing Lord’s supper is
  - b. singing *Clementine* together is not *fellowship* but singing hymns and praises is

#### C. Similarities To the Temple Cleansing

1. we can eat have our sing-alongs at home and go to our concerts at the Erwin Center and run our garage sales in our own neighborhoods for ourselves
2. we can eat our meals at home: 1 Cor. 11:20-22, 34

### III. What is the “Social Gospel”?

#### A. Social Gospel Began In This Century

1. “A movement in American Protestant Christianity, esp. in the first part of the twentieth century to bring the social order into conformity with Christian principles” (Webster’s New Collegiate Dictionary).
2. the church becomes the tool to improve living conditions and cure social problems
3. It becomes the business of the church to provide: secular education, medical treatment, housing, food, recreation, job training, environmental activism, political activism, entertainment, etc. in an effort to “serve the whole man.”

#### B. Why Is It A Different Gospel?

1. Jesus’s mission has always been and still is to seek to save souls. Not to serve “the whole man” but to save the eternal part of man; his soul.
2. though the social gospel might operate with good motives, the end does not justify unauthorized means: not the church’s business
3. It is important to respect the purpose for which Jesus built His church. We are His servants, not His co-architects

#### C. Examples of the Social Gospel In Action

1. “An afternoon of fellowship and fun is planned tomorrow at the Madison Church of Christ, where organizers hope to set a world record for the largest tug-of-war...after Bible school and worship, Big Spring Sunday will begin at 11:00 A.M. at the church...activities include an old time picnic, relay races, kick ball, volleyball, rook, clowns, pony rides and horseshoes. A representative from Guinness Book of World Records will be present to verify the tug-of-war” (The *Tennessean*; 5/4/91).
2. “Harris O’Yates, the ‘coordinating elder’ thanked the members of the Central Church of Christ

for their part in the 'Halloween party for inner city children.' He said, 'The facilities are wonderful but the commitment of the people made the difference'" (Central News Bulletin; 11/11/90).

3. "Officials of the Faith Baptist Church of Glen Burnie, MD, figured they couldn't beat Super Bowl fever, so they decided to join it. They set up three big screen televisions and a snack bar in the fellowship hall of the congregation which normally holds worship services on Sunday evenings...at halftime paused for informal worship service, then returned to the tube for the rest of the game...Matt. Dillard said he and his wife, Marianne, had never been to a church football game before. 'Instead of skipping church, you get to be here...it doesn't make you feel so bad" (Associated Press).

4. "A modern day Noah's ark is being built at Madison Avenue Church of Christ...an ark frame is being built around the exterior of the church's gymnasium. The gym's interior is set up to look like an ark...live animals, donated by the Nashville Zoo and private citizens, will be on hand to provide extra wildness" (The *Tennessean*, 7/21/91).

5. Family Fun Crusade with Cowboy Steve; Gospel Illusionist/Ventriloquist; Granny Hoot 'n Nanny & Cousin Clementine; Little Nowannasin; action packed excitement for the entire family!!!

#### D. Not So Glorious Results

1. denominationalist and feel good brethren point to increased attendance

a. "You can't argue with success," they say.

b. But what are you defining as success?: filling the pews or glorifying God

1. the gospel is reduced to bad children's cereal

2. no one would buy it were it not for the premium enclosed

3. is this what we think of the gospel now?

4. shall we bribe people to sit beside us during worship services with the promise of a picnic and puppet show afterward?

2. some argue that people aren't interested in the gospel anymore, so let's attach coffee and doughnuts to Christ and Him crucified

a. were Jesus and His apostles involved in such chicanery in first century evangelism?

b. when people would not accept the gospel, Jesus commanded his 70 messengers to shake the dust off their feet as they left the town, not fire up the hibachi

c. "The way to a man's heart is through his stomach.": that may work in courting, but it is not permitted in evangelism

3. please consider the type of people converted to premiums

a. those gained by methods other than the word are unstable and in reality unconverted

b. when the hot dogs disappear and softball season closes, so do they: John 6:26-27, 66

#### Conclusion

The church is referred to as the fullness of Christ, the new creation of God, the body of the reconciled, God's household and holy temple, the manifestation of God's wisdom and bride of Christ. But it ceases to be all those things when it ceases to be what God made it.

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