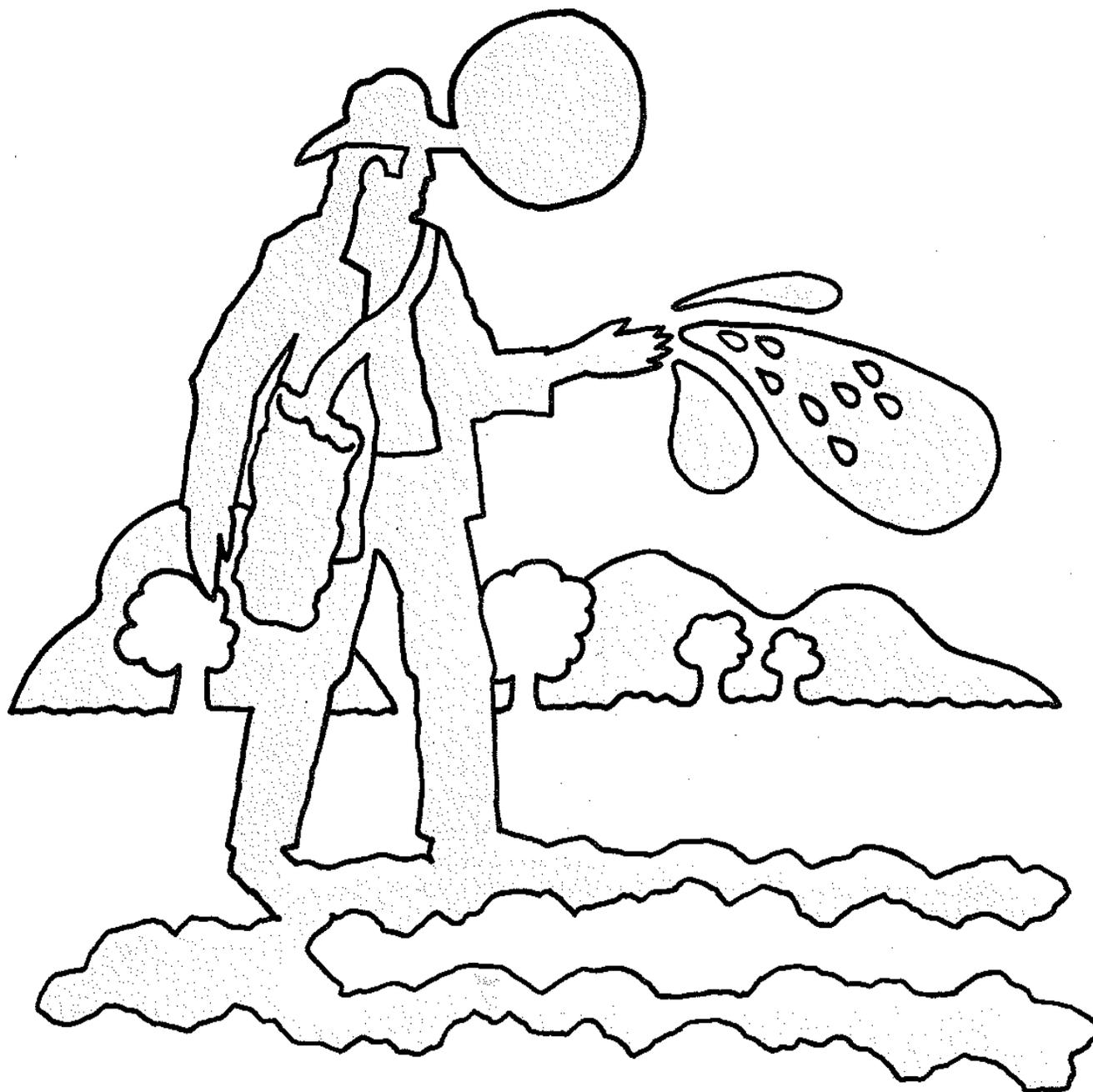


ADULT BIBLICAL EDUCATION SERIES

Vol. I, Book I

An Introduction to the Study Series

prepared by Jack B. Scott, Ph.D.



Pictured on the cover is the Sower, taken from Matthew 13, The Parable of the Sower. All quarterlies in volume one will bear this emblem, thus enabling quick identification of the first volume, books 1 and 2. Subsequent volumes will trace the progress of the seed sown until full harvest (the last volume) in order to reflect the Biblical concept of the believer as like a plant planted by God which grows to fruition, to the glory of God (Psalm 1:3).

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INTRODUCTION TO THE CURRICULUM SERIES: STUDIES IN GOD'S WORD

Volume I, Book I

Inasmuch as we are undertaking a most important project, the preparation of a 6-1/2 year series of studies in the Word of God, it seems quite appropriate to explain what our goals are and what our underlying theme shall be. Let it be said from the beginning that our goal is to be one with the Lord in His goal for His people. It is our aim therefore to prepare a series of studies for the adults of the church which will prepare them, and prove to be aids to them, in their fulfillment of God's great purpose in their lives. This is no mean task and we do not undertake it with any great confidence in ourselves but our confidence is in the Lord; and as we seek to study His inerrant Word, we pray that we shall prove to be faithful in our handling of that Word so that through these studies God's children may equip themselves better to lay hold of God's purpose for their lives and better to see that purpose fulfilled in themselves.

On the following pages you will find an exposition of the ground and guidelines which shall be before us as we develop this material. We welcome your response and your suggestions as the study-quarterlies become available to you. We ask your prayers that what we produce may prove to be a worthy tool for spiritual growth and may render a faithful service to the Lord and to the Presbyterian Church in America.

The Committee for Christian Education and Publications,
Lawrenceville, Georgia

PREFACE

The book in your hands is written to share with you something of our thinking at the Committee for Christian Education and Publications as we undertake the writing of a curriculum to be used by adults in the church over the next few years. We want you, the users of this curriculum, to be as excited about the project as we are here. We want you to want to use it, and so we are here sharing with you something of how we feel about the importance of such a curriculum and about the best kind of curriculum to accomplish what will please the Lord.

A good curriculum ought to reflect a clear starting point and a certain destination. In designing this curriculum, we have seen the starting point in two senses: starting at the beginning of God's Revelation and also starting where you are spiritually, wherever that may be. We also see the destination in two senses. First, our destination is to study systematically the whole of God's written Word, so that, at the end of the 6-1/2 years, we will have studied in considerable detail the whole revelation of God for His people. We also see our destination described in terms of God's purpose, and we desire the curriculum to be an aid in moving each of us toward that great goal of our Lord.

With that in mind, this book is prepared to help you to see what we wish to do and why, and to enlist you in this project of study.

Chapter One of this book deals with God's great goal, His design in the creation of all things that have come into existence, and particularly His purpose in creating us. We cannot start out in the right direction unless first we are agreed on where the Lord desires to take us. Chapter one, therefore, centers around one verse, Ephesians 1:4, and its application in God's creating man in His image, so that even when man sinned and refused to cooperate with God, God's purpose nevertheless remained unchanged and continued to be fulfilled through the redemption of sinful men.

Chapter two focuses on the events surrounding Israel in the wilderness when God first gathered together an identifiable people of God and challenged them to be holy, bearing His image gloriously before the world. Here we see the purpose of God being expressed to a body of believers, a church if you will, which applies God's purpose to us not only as individuals, but also as the people of God on earth.

Chapter three helps us to discover God's choice for the proper setting for the holy lives of his people: not in isolation on the mountain tops, but out in the world, in their daily work and daily living before the world. We seek here to show what "full-time service to the Lord" really means to each of us, and not just to ministers or missionaries.

In chapter four we learn that showing forth our holiness (our belonging exclusively to the Lord) entails more than merely doing things for God. It involves a right attitude of heart which ought to be evident in all of our relationships with our fellow men and with God. This right attitude is most often called joy in Scripture and refers not to some plastered-on smile but to a heart-felt joy coming out of hearts that love the Lord.

Having said all of this, the fifth chapter seeks to draw flesh and blood illustrations from Scripture of just the points we have been making, using Jonah as an example of one child of God whose life, as portrayed in the Bible, ran counter to the purpose God revealed to him, which prevented him from bearing God's image before the world to God's glory. By doing the work God gave him to do with the wrong attitude of heart, he neither pleased the Lord in what he did nor did he show forth that joy so important in the love of God's children. In contrast, Daniel, in a most unpromising situation, nevertheless did please God in his job and showed forth a spiritual joy that could not be quenched. By Daniel's life, God was glorified.

Finally, in the last chapter, we stress the importance, and indeed the centrality of God's Word in the lives of all who are found to be in accord with God's good purpose for His children. This then encouraged us to lay before you a curriculum of study in God's Word which will, we pray, better equip you to move toward the great and high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

THE REAL BEGINNING OF CHRISTIAN LIVING

Long before the worlds were created or any part of the universe had come into existence, the Triune God was enjoying a fellowship from all eternity. The holy God, existing from eternity in three Persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, was complete within Himself, needing nothing. He was holy — being fully self-sufficient in all of His attributes — being all and containing all. Indeed, our feeble words cannot describe His existence but in the most inadequate manner. We do know that the three Persons of the Trinity did enjoy the fellowship of one another in perfection and in a bond of love: complete and lacking nothing (John 17:5,24).

We know that the love and fellowship of the Persons of the Trinity was perfect and full, needing nothing in addition; and yet, the marvel of marvels is that the Triune God, in that perfect state, determined to share His glory and His joy and His love and His fellowship with creatures who would be in His image and able to enjoy all of that which He, from all eternity, had enjoyed.

Perhaps the most specific verse which declares this truth to us is found in Ephesians 1:4. It must therefore be our beginning point for all that we shall write and teach regarding the great purpose of God for our lives. Let us look at this verse now.

"Even as he chose us in him (in Christ) before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blemish before him in love". We note here, to begin with, that before God had ever brought the worlds into existence He determined to have a people who could know fellowship with the Lord for ever. They were to be holy and without blemish.

These are not synonymous terms but each has important meaning for us. In Scripture, whenever we find the term "holy" used in application to any other person or thing than God Himself, it has the meaning of that which is set aside for God exclusively, belonging totally to Him and for His glory. Thus, when we read of the holy vessels of the tabernacle, they are vessels set aside for God's glory and for His use alone. Holy places are places set aside for honoring God alone. The holy Word is that Word which is totally from God and for His glory. Finally, holy people are those whose lives are totally given to service to God. They belong to God and their lives find their meaning and fulfillment only in total commitment to the Lord. Such are, in Scripture, called saints, holy ones.

Being "without blemish" has many synonyms: perfect, whole, complete, sinless, righteous, etc. In essence, it means faultless, without any sin or any failing. Those who were to spend eternity in God's presence were to be such, knowing no sin, for sin and sinners cannot abide in the presence of God.

They were also to be in God's presence (before God) in a bond of love. Just as the Persons of the Trinity had always enjoyed the presence of one another and had known that love which bound them together, so they purposed to invite these creatures into that fellowship and love, first to know God's love for them and then to exercise a like love toward God and toward one another as fellow creatures in God's image.

All of this we are told in the brief verse, Ephesians 1:4. We could easily spend the rest of our lives marveling in that plan of God which would include us. The very beginning of such a realization in our hearts is enough to humble us and overwhelm our hearts. How we praise the Lord not only for His plan but for choosing us to be a part of that plan!

But we must not overlook one other most important point in this verse: we are chosen in Christ. Therefore, the success of this plan being carried out rests solely in the Lord and not in us or in our abilities or merit. We are chosen in Christ. That is a basic part of God's plan to have a people holy, without blemish, dwelling in His presence, in love. It is not as though God ever

reckoned that we could get along without Christ. From the beginning, the hope of the success of this plan rested in the person and work of God's Son, Jesus Christ. Nothing is more clearly taught from the beginning than this. Therefore, all of the Old and New Testament revelation from God finds at its center, Jesus Christ. The Scriptures speak of Him everywhere. His active work is always presumed and very frequently explicitly taught in God's Word from Genesis to Revelation.

As we open the Bible to the beginning, to the Book of Genesis, we read first of the creation in Genesis 1,2. We are, or should be, impressed with the fact that the existence of God is presumed from the first word in the Bible. We note too that God first created matter and the heavens and the earth in a chaotic state, then brought out of that chaos light and order. That order continues as we trace through the days of creation down to the sixth day, the day of the creation of man in God's image (v. 26). Here we focus our attention now.

We note immediately that God speaks here in terms of the persons of the Trinity: "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness". As we shall see, God built right into creation itself the very purpose and plan so explicitly stated in Ephesians 1:4. The Persons of the Trinity are all involved in creation and intend that man, in God's image, shall reflect the personality of God Himself. God created man for Himself, in His image, thus holy — belonging to and made for God — to enjoy communion with God forever (v. 27). The holiness of man, as created, is also seen in that he was made to have dominion over all lesser creatures, in service to God alone (v. 28). Furthermore, in all conduct he was accountable to the Lord only (2:16,17). In all of these ways we see the holiness of man as created: belonging exclusively to God and living for God and for service to Him.

God also created man without blemish. We know this as we read Genesis 1:31. In the conclusion of creation, the Lord saw all that He had made, including man, and pronounced it very good. To appreciate the sense and significance of this statement — of God's judgment of all to be good — we need to refer to a New Testament incident. In Mark 10:17 following, we have the account of a man who addressed Jesus as "Good Teacher". He was using the term "good" there in the popular way, calling men good. We do the same today, speaking of a good meal, a good time, a good book, etc. Jesus rebuked him for using the term so carelessly. Of course, Jesus was not here denying His own goodness, but He was rebuking that man for using the term "good" in a casual way. That word ought to be reserved for that which is good in God's sight. Thus only God can properly be called good, and of course that which He makes to be good. When, therefore, God declares that what He has made is "good", we are assured that it is perfect, whole, faultless, lacking nothing. Man was so created.

Again, God created man both to know God's love and also with the full capacity to show his love to God and to his fellow creature. First, we see from the beginning how God showed His love to man even before man came into existence by creating all things good and in proper order for man's benefit and blessing. Before man came onto the scene, already much that is lovely was made for him and with his needs in mind. In Genesis 2, this is beautifully expressed as the garden is described, where He placed Adam, the first man (2:8ff). There, God provided for Adam every good tree and fruit for food, to meet his every need. At the same time, God provided all other things which man could want or need (vs. 10-14). Moreover, He provided for man's needs in other ways as well: He gave to Adam a purpose in life, a place to care for under God and for God (v. 15). And when no other creature like Adam was found among the creatures God had made, who could satisfy his needs for fellowship with a like creature, God, showing Adam first that he had this need, then created Eve to be his complement, a help meeting his every need socially (vs. 18-25).

We have seen, therefore, God's love shown for man in meeting his every need. But we should see also that God made man with a capacity for and with the opportunity to show his love

for God and for his fellow creature, Eve. Note that the Lord gave to Adam a service to perform in love toward God and also commanded him not to do what God forbade (2:16,17). By his obedience to God's command, Adam would show his love for God. Remember, Jesus said later "If ye love me, ye will keep my commandments" (John 14:15; compare 14:21,23). Right into creation itself, the Lord placed the opportunity for Adam to show his love to God.

In addition, Adam was given Eve to love and cherish, so that the two should become one flesh, each meeting the mutual needs of the other: spiritually and physically as well as socially.

As we view creation then, we see that the Lord set about and did successfully create man in perfect accord with His own purpose held before creation: to have a people holy, without blemish, to dwell in God's presence, in a bond of love.

When we turn to Genesis three, however, we see the sad story of man's utter failure to be all that God had purposed him to be. First, he failed to be holy. This was the beginning of his sin and rebellion. When Adam, through Eve, first turned an ear to the words of Satan, giving to them credibility, he turned from being holy. He then began to be unholy, not any longer belonging exclusively to the Lord.

We read first of Eve's giving credence to Satan's words and thus rejecting the sole authority of God for what was right and what was wrong (3:6). Before she even partook of the fruit, she had already, in her heart, ceased to be holy — wholly committed to the Lord. Nor can we let Adam off the hook here, for we read that he was with her all along. Evidently Adam stood by and allowed her to be deceived by Satan, for she was clearly deceived by his lies, being no match for him. In short, Adam allowed Eve to lead him spiritually, instead of taking the place as spiritual head of that first family. In doing so, he too sinned, even before he partook of the fruit (see I Tim. 2:11 -15).

In verse 7, we read that when they had eaten of the fruit, thus acting not on the basis of faith in God's Word but making themselves the determiners of right and wrong, they immediately sensed their nakedness and shame. They were no longer without blemish and they knew it. Not willing to know sin by God's definition of what is sin, they had to learn sin by experience; but in the process, they died spiritually.

This of course made it impossible for them any longer to remain in fellowship with God, in His presence. Now, when they heard evidence of God's presence with them, they ran and hid. Imagine, these who had been made to have fellowship with God, instead, now would run and seek to hide from His presence! And the irony of it is that they used those very trees which God had created for their enjoyment and good to hide, or at least attempt to hide, from God. It was not the last time that man would misuse and corrupt the good purpose for which God had created all creation.

Finally, they certainly no longer had either love for God or for one another. First, Adam blamed Eve for his predicament and then God, for making Eve (3:12). Then Eve tried to make excuse for having been deceived by one of God's creatures. But in fact, as Paul later says, "Adam was not deceived, but the woman..." (I Tim. 2:14). By this I take Paul to mean that Adam knew just what he was doing. He sinned deliberately while Eve was actually duped by Satan working through the serpent. She was duped because God had not given to her the place of leadership spiritually in the family; that responsibility was given to Adam. Adam failed to exercise his responsibility and so he fell into sin and death: not holy, not without blemish, not able to live any longer in God's presence and neither knowing any longer the love of God nor showing love either to God or to his wife.

One might suppose at this point that God's plan had been defeated and that God was not successful in what He set out to do. But such was not the case at all. Remember, God chose us in Christ. Man must learn this lesson: without Christ, the son of God, he would have no hope of fulfilling God's good purpose for him. No sooner had man fallen into sin than we hear the words

of God speaking of that Seed to come by woman who will, in the end, triumph over Satan and over Satan's seed (Gen. 3:15). That Seed is, of course, Christ, as Paul shows us in Roman 16:20. It is only by the grace of God through Jesus Christ that we have any hope of triumphing over Satan and seeing him bruised under our heel.

As Genesis three closes, therefore, we see man fallen into sin and without hope except through the promised Seed to come, born of a woman. We also see that God's plan to have a people holy, without blemish and in the presence of God in love is not changed. It shall be done — through Christ. And the rest of Scripture is an account of God's doing it and of God's continually reminding His children, those who do believe, that they are to be caught up in God's good purpose for them, being co-laborers with the Lord in moving on toward that goal of God that they be holy, without blemish, enjoying God's presence, in a bond of love both toward God and toward one another. That goal is ever before us throughout Scripture. We are particularly made aware of this fact when we read the testimony of Paul to the Philippians: "Not that I have already obtained, or am already made perfect: but I press on, if so be that I may lay hold on that for which also I was laid hold on by Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself yet to have laid hold: but one thing I do, forgetting the things which are behind, and stretching forward to the things which are before, I press on toward the goal unto the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." (Phil. 3:12-14) It is to that high calling that Paul calls us when, in Romans 12:1,2, he calls us, in the light of all that God has done for us in Christ Jesus, to present ourselves — "a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service."

We shall now note how, elsewhere in God's Word, we are ever made aware of God's activity in pursuing this good purpose as expressed in Ephesians 1:4, and also actively calling His children to be caught up in that purpose consciously and willingly in their lives.

In particular, we will pass over the work of God with the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and move on to the time when a people of God, organized into tribes, first became conscious of being called to be God's people. Here, for the first time, we find a people organized for worship and for service as a body. And that body is to be holy in accord with God's will to have a holy people. We shall wrestle with what it means to be God's holy people and why this is important. We shall see too, why being holy requires us to bear God's image gloriously before the world, carrying in our very bodies the evidence that we do belong to God and are sealed by Him for service in His Kingdom.

HOLINESS AND THE CALL TO BE GOD'S IMAGE BEARERS

After much history had passed between the time Adam sinned and God began to call out from among the sinners a definable people to be holy and to bear His image before the world, we come to the incidents at Sinai, where the Lord first isolated His people, Israel, after bringing them out of bondage in Egypt. There He began to instruct them in terms of their relationship to Him and in terms of what He expected of them as His people.

We begin to study at Exodus 19. Note the Lord speaks to Israel there, after their having experienced the great deliverance from Egypt. God notes how He has borne them on eagles' wings, a figurative picture of how God had literally lifted them out of the clutches of their enemies and had brought them safely through the terrors of the wilderness to Sinai (Ex. 19:4ff).

Most important, He tells them that they have been brought unto Him, by Him. That is, God is reclaiming these people for Himself, to be His exclusive people.

But there is a condition, if they are to prove to be His people indeed: they are to obey His voice and keep His covenant. In short, they must be caught up in His good purpose for them. Then they will be known by all as the people of God and then God will be glorified by them (v. 5).

Finally, He calls them a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. They each and together are to belong to the Lord exclusively: to live for His glory alone and to live to please Him alone (v. 6). Once more, then, we are assured that the Lord has not abandoned His plan to have a people to be holy, without blemish, to dwell forever in His presence in a fellowship of Love.

Following the marvelous challenge and call which the Lord had put to the people, God then gave rules of conduct for His people. By means of their living in the way the Lord taught them to live, they would show themselves to be the people of God and God would be glorified before the pagan world. These rules of conduct we know as the Ten Commandments. They were never given as the means to salvation but were the way the Lord intended those whom He called to live.

We shall not be able to dwell in depth on these commandments at this place. Later, we shall, in our series, study them in more detail. But we must look at the first three in particular as they relate to the great purpose of God for His people and for each of us as individuals.

The first commandment: "Thou shalt have no other gods before (besides) me", is at one with the purpose of God that we belong exclusively to Him and that we therefore be holy. The translation "besides" is far better and clearly communicates the same concepts we have already seen introduced in the use of the word "holy". It is not different from what Jesus later said when He declared that we cannot serve God and mammon (any other God or goal) (Matt. 6:24).

The second commandment warns that we are not to make any graven image or any likeness of anything in heaven or on earth for worship (Ex 20:4-6). In essence the commandment forbids man from expressing his concepts of God in his own way of thinking. This is because man's thoughts about God are always erroneous when coming out of his own heart and cannot therefore be true. Man invariably creates his gods in his own sinful image, according to his own corrupt nature. A study of the concepts of the gods as found in the writings and practices of those who populated the ancient Near East will convince anyone of the truth of this. God must not be known on the basis of what men conceive of Him to be. This clearly implies that man must be dependent upon the revelation which God gives of Himself in His Word. It was just such a revelation that God was beginning to unfold to Moses in these days in the wilderness.

We shall later come back to make a few other observations regarding this commandment

and also the third, but for now we shall move on. While the people were still at Sinai and while Moses was with the Lord, we read in Exodus 32, of the incident of the Golden Calf. We are familiar with it and no doubt recall that when Moses delayed to come down, the people, being restless, demanded that Aaron, the only visible leader, make for them a god or perhaps gods (v. 1). They were willing to surrender their gold for the purpose of having a god in accord with their own conceptions. Aaron, being weak, complied with their wishes and the product was a golden calf to which the people immediately accorded deity (v. 4). We see then the truth of what Paul later declared: "Knowing God, they glorified him not as God, neither gave thanks; but became vain in their reasonings, and their senseless heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools and changed the glory of the incorruptible God for the likeness of an image of corruptible man, and of birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things." (Rom. 1:21-23)

It was out of this context that Moses sought to see the glory of God (Ex. 33:18). No doubt dismayed by the actions of these people, Moses was desirous of having truth about God and His nature to declare to the people, lest once again they devise gods after their own sinful nature. Just what Moses sought to see we are not sure. He wished to see God's glory, something that he could proclaim to the people about the truth of God.

The Lord's response to Moses was to promise to make all of His goodness pass before Moses (v. 19). He related this goodness to His very Name, indicating that what He declared to Moses would be the very Name by which God would be known by His people. We need to remember that in Biblical usage, the name was far more than just a handle to call one by; it was that which reflected the very nature of the individual. For God therefore to proclaim His name before Moses was to declare truth about Himself to Moses.

We are never really told just what Moses saw but we do learn what the Lord declared to him in revealing His goodness to Moses and in declaring His Name to Him (34:5-7).

The Lord proclaimed: "The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abundant in lovingkindness and truth; keeping lovingkindness for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin; and that will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, upon the third and upon the fourth generation."

This Name, this Goodness, this Glory of the Lord is an awesome and wonderful revelation. It teaches us of the loving nature of God and of His readiness to forgive sins; but it also shows that the Lord will not ignore or overlook sin. Sin must be dealt with. God, in good time, would further reveal just how it must be dealt with; but He clearly would not ignore it in the lives of His children.

This particular revelation and passage is more often quoted within the Old Testament than any other. Time and again it was the guideline by which God's people would express their knowledge of Him. It was the basis for their repentance and for their courage and hope and would be the primary channel by which they knew and declared truth concerning God. We can illustrate this.

Soon after, on another occasion when the people had displeased the Lord while still in the wilderness, God threatened to destroy them and spare only Moses (Num. 14). Here we find Moses pleading with the Lord not to destroy them and reminding the Lord of His own revelation of His nature. He quotes that revelation given in Exodus 34:6,7 (Num. 14:18); and on the basis of that revelation, he pleads with God to pardon them (v. 19). It seems obvious that the Lord was here testing Moses to see whether he would rightly use the truth about God by reflecting the same compassion for these sinners that God had shown in His revelation to be part of His own nature. Moses rightly handled this Word of God.

Later, we see Joel the prophet, in calling to the people to repent of their sins, quote this

Exodus passage and call Israel to return to such a compassionate God, ready to forgive their sins (Joel 2:13). Still later, in Nehemiah's time, after the Exile, once again we find the truth of this revelation in Exodus 34:6,7, recalled and it proves to be instrumental in the people's repentance and return to the Lord (Neh. 9:17).

At times, the revelation could and was indeed misused by some. Jonah is an example. When commanded by the Lord to go and to preach to the heathens of Nineveh lest God be angry and destroy them, Jonah refused to go. He later gave as his reason for not going to Nineveh the first time, that he knew that God was merciful and lovingkind (quoting the Exodus 34 passage) (Jonah 4:2). Thus, knowing that God was this way, he, failing to have the same compassion, wished the truth about God to be withheld from the Ninevites so that they, his enemies, could be destroyed. Jonah did not rightly handle the Word of truth. The Psalmist also frequently recites this revelation or portions of it in praise to God and in wonder (Ps. 103:8).

We see then that the Old Testament is replete with quotations from Exodus 34, indicating that this was the true basis of the people's knowledge of the Lord. No wonder the Lord did not wish them to make any graven image or any concept of God in their own eyes. This marvelous revelation was sufficient to declare the truth about God before men. We note too that it was to be the Name by which God would be known to His people and that in the declaring of that truth about God, God would indeed be glorified before men. To glorify God then is to show forth this truth about God before men, in words and in conduct.

When we come to the New Testament, we read in John's gospel that "the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld his glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father), full of grace and truth." (John. 1:14) I believe that here John is saying that the verbal revelation of God (Exodus 34) is now become flesh in the person and work of Jesus Christ. What God revealed Himself to be through those words to Moses long before is now seen living before the eyes of men in Jesus Christ. He was in the beginning with God (being God) and is now living in the flesh before men.

Note how John too links this truth about God, revealed through Jesus, as "his glory". He is the only one who has so come from God filled with the very nature of God in himself. The essence of that nature John calls here "grace and truth", which is not unlike the verbal revelation God gave to Moses long before.

Elsewhere in the New Testament, the reality of Jesus bearing the very image of God is clearly taught. Philippians 2:6, speaks of Christ existing in the form of God and of being on an equality with God; while II Corinthians 4:4, speaks of the glory of Christ, "who is the image of God"; and Hebrews 1:3 says: "(Christ) being the effulgence of his glory, and the very image of his substance ..."

We learn then that when Jesus came in the flesh, He came revealing the full image of God and so by His own life of service on earth manifested the lovingkindness and mercy of God and at the same time would not overlook sin. Indeed, he came to deal with sin in his own body.

But that is not all. Scripture goes on to show that we too are called to bear the image of Christ and therefore of God in and by the lives we live before the unbelieving world. In Romans 8:29, we read: "For whom he foreknew, he also foreordained to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren". We are called to be conformed to Christ's image.

In I! Corinthians 3:18, we are taught how we are to be conformed to Christ's image. We behold the glory of the Lord as looking into a mirror (His Word) and we are, "transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord the Spirit." Two passages come to mind: Romans 12:1,2, which calls us to be transformed by the renewing of our minds (again through Scripture); and James 1:23-25, which tells of one looking into a mirror as one who looks into God's Word and sees there himself both as he is and as he ought to be.

It is no wonder then that God did not wish us to express any human concepts of God. He indeed desired for us rather to have the very image of God fully formed within ourselves, through His revelation to us, both verbally and in the person and work of His Son.

We return then to the third commandment and see in it significant new meaning perhaps. There, God commands us not to take (bear or carry) the name of God in vain (to no purpose). So often, when we hear this command, we think only that we are not to use God's name in cursing. While it does, of course, teach this, that is only a very small fraction of the significance of this verse.

The better translation is "bear" or "carry", not "take". We are to bear the Name of God before the unbelieving world as we have just seen. We are to bear the glory of God before the world. We are to bear the image of God before men. And we must not do so in vain, that is, to no purpose, or carelessly. What a charge this is! We do daily bear God's name as Christians. We are identified with the people of God. We were the day we first believed. We must be careful therefore that nothing we do, nothing we say, no attitude of our hearts is in such a way as would bring dishonor to God or would take glory from His Name. We are responsible in all we think, say, and do to bear the Name of God (the image of God) gloriously before the world and among our brethren as well.

This is a sobering responsibility and gives to us fuller understanding of what it means to be holy, belonging fully to, being fully associated with, the Name of God and His glory. We are all to be God's image bearers, Christ's image bearers before men, and to do so, not in vain (in a careless or thoughtless manner). It requires continuing consciousness of our high calling and continual striving for that high goal of God for us to be God's people: holy, without blemish, walking in God's presence, in a bond of love; showing that image in all we say and do.

However, it has been the interpretation of the church in much of its history that such high goals for the believer's life could best be worked out in a life withdrawn from the world, either literally, in monasteries, convents, and remote places of the earth, or in some profession which would tend to protect the believer from the world, such as the ministry, the mission field, or other professional church service. But God's Word shows clearly that God's intent is that our striving toward the high goal of God in Christ be done in the arena of the world, out where we live daily — in the world, but not like the world.

The traditional use of the term "full-time Christian servant" is, as noted above, in application to a church professional such as a minister or missionary or Bible teacher in school. But we need to see that the term, as Scripture sees it, ought to be applicable to every Christian, involving every believer in seeing his daily work, his job, as his sphere of service in the Kingdom of God.

THE CALL TO EVERY BELIEVER TO FULL-TIME SERVICE TO THE LORD

One of the failings of the church and particularly of its leaders throughout the history of the church has been its response to God's call for us to be His image bearers before the world. It has often been the failure of the church properly to challenge all believers to be in full-time Christian service. By the term "full-time Christian service" I do not mean the traditional use of this term. Usually we think of someone in full-time service for the Lord who is a professional, employed either by the church or by some Christian organization, to do a work full-time — as his job. But what I mean is not this. Rather, I mean that we are all called to make the job we are doing a full-time service for the Lord, no matter how menial that job or position may seem to be.

This requires further redefining. We speak of one job as secular and another as religious or spiritual. By that we again usually mean that those who are involved in jobs out in the world are in secular work, while those who are engaged in work for the church in some professional way: minister, missionary, Bible teacher, etc. are in a spiritual service or work. But we need to see that it is possible for one who is a minister or a missionary to be engaged in a secular work. Again, I do not mean that he or she is moonlighting, but that he has managed to make his preaching a secular job, because of his attitude toward that work or his relationship or lack of it toward the Lord while doing the work.

Again, one may be in what we usually call a secular work: digging ditches, working in a business office, managing a factory, etc. and yet be, in reality, doing a spiritual service because he or she does what he does to the glory of God, to please the Lord. Whether a work, then, is spiritual or secular, depends not so much on the nature of the job as the nature of the worker, his attitude and commitment to the Lord in his doing that work.

In the Book of Ecclesiastes we find this thesis very clearly defined and exemplified, but it is indeed a truth to be found throughout Scripture that God has called all of His children to be full-time in service to Him.

Let us now look more closely at the message of Ecclesiastes. We are told that the opening part of the Book is a quotation from one called the Preacher. He is described as king in Jerusalem and as the son of David (1:1). Just who he is is not told, but in all likelihood the Preacher is Solomon. The long introduction from his words is used by the author here to give the context in which the message of Ecclesiastes is written. We need therefore to consider briefly the life and times of Solomon and what followed in the wake of his tragic life.

From the early chapters of I Kings, we learn that Solomon, the son of David, was chosen by David to be the king and successor to David's throne.

David himself gave to Solomon sound advice in terms of his rule. When Solomon did begin to rule after his father's death, we learn that he humbly sought wisdom from the Lord. God gave to him wisdom exceeding the wisdom of any before him. God also gave to Solomon riches and vast resources of gold and silver, and peace besides, as an atmosphere in which to serve the Lord.

Considering all of this, it is hard to imagine one whose life was more promising than was Solomon's. Yet, as we read further, we learn that in his latter years, Solomon made shipwreck of his life, turning from the Lord and embracing paganism in large measure. What happened to his life? Why did this happen? In part, the Book of Ecclesiastes seeks to answer this question.

The reason for our consideration of the message of this Book here is in order that we might, through the message of this Book, gain better insight into our own daily lives and what we ought to be doing with them. We are often challenged to give our Sundays to the Lord and are

exhorted to attend morning and evening church services. We are also urged to attend the Wednesday Bible study and perhaps to visit in the community, witnessing for the Lord. We may be asked to take part in other ways in various services of the church. But what of the best part of the majority of our time? that time when we daily go to work and do our jobs in the eight best hours of each day? This area of our lives has, for the most part, been ignored, as though it was apart from our religious life, apart from our responsibilities to the Lord, unless we should quit our job and go into the ministry or to the mission field.

As important as the services in church work mentioned above are in the church for us and for the rest of God's people, we need to see that if we are going to speak of being God's image-bearers and of being in full-time Christian service, then we must come to grips with that in which we spend the most of the best hours of our lives, our daily jobs. It is this to which Ecclesiastes speaks.

No one had greater resources than Solomon and no one seemingly had better opportunity to serve the Lord in a splendid way. Yet as we read I Kings 11, we observe that Solomon's life came to no good. Let us now see just what his own testimony was of his life and its meaning.

He summed up his life as "vanity of vanities ... all is vanity" (1:2). When he looked around him at God's great creation he found that it was monotonous and vain: "The sun also ariseth, and the sun goeth down ... The wind goeth toward the south, and turneth about unto the north; it turneth about continually in its course ... All the rivers run into the sea, yet the sea is not full; ... thither they go again. All things are full of weariness ... there is no new thing under the sun." (Eccl. 1:5-9).

How sad! And how different from the Psalmist who, looking at that same revelation, could say: "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth his handiwork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge" (Ps. 19:1,2).

They looked at the same creation but out of very different eyes, or rather, from very different hearts.

We go farther and hear more of Solomon's testimony. Having great wisdom, he determined to apply that wisdom to seek out all knowledge about all that is done under the sun. He gained an encyclopedic knowledge (1:13). Yet in all of that knowledge attained by all of his wisdom, he concluded: "all is vanity and a striving after wind." (1:14).

So, he determined to find meaning in life by pursuit of his own pleasures. But this too proved to be vain (2:1). He built buildings and planted vineyards and did all kinds of engineering feats as pleased him (vs. 4ff). He gathered all silver and gold from all of the lands under his control and gathered all kinds of talented singers to perform to his delight (vs. 8ff). But when he looked at all he had and had done, his judgment was that all was vain and a striving after wind, "there was no profit under the sun" (v. 11).

Did anyone else ever have such resources or such opportunity to make something of his life as Solomon did? Yet hear what he concludes about his own life: "So I hated life ... and I hated all my labor wherein I labored under the sun ... Therefore I turned about to cause my heart to despair concerning all the labor wherein I had labored under the sun." (2:17-20)

It is at this point that the author of Ecclesiastes introduces the counter theme to the one Solomon or the Preacher has been stating. And this new theme becomes the dominant theme of the whole Book.

He declares: "There is nothing better for a man than that he should eat and drink, and make his soul enjoy good in his labor. This also I saw, it is from the hand of God. For who can eat, or who can have enjoyment more than I? For to the man that pleaseth him, God giveth wisdom and knowledge, and joy; but to the sinner he giveth travail, to gather and to heap up, that he may give to him that pleaseth God." (2:24-26)

Note that the author declares the following: 1) that the best life a man can live is one in

which he truly enjoys his labor; 2) that one can only do this when he sees his opportunity for joy and labor as from the hand of God; 3) that such a life pleases God; 4) and that God will reward such a life with wisdom, knowledge, and joy while taking these things and all else from those who do not please Him.

In essence, the writer is saying that in contrast to the vain life exemplified in the Preacher, there is a far better life which God offers to all of His children. It is to see their daily labor as an entrustment from God and to invest their life in doing that labor as unto the Lord, and not to please themselves. Solomon used all of his resources to please himself, not God; and in the end, he lost all that was truly worthwhile. He therefore pronounced life vain and useless.

The writer goes on to develop this new theme as follows:

3:13 — "... that every man should eat and drink, and enjoy good in all of his labor, is the gift of God". Here he sees his labor and its enjoyment as a gift of God to him. Like those who received the talents in Jesus' parable, he sees this as an entrustment from God, a free gift, but one to be put to use for God's glory.

3:22 — "... there is nothing better, than that a man should rejoice in his works; for that is his portion:" Again, he sees both his work and the enjoyment of it as coming from God. Whatever talents he has to do what he does, comes from God; and to enjoy the doing of it, he must do it as a labor for the Lord. Thus every child of God becomes like Adam was before the fall, entrusted by God with a sphere of responsibility, a labor to be performed, a work to be done, with an accounting to be made to the Lord alone for it.

8:15 — "... a man hath no better thing under the sun, than to eat, and to drink, and to be joyful: for that shall abide with him in his labor all the days of his life which God hath given him under the sun," Here is added the concept that such a life and such a labor will abide and the joy will abide with it. It counts for something. One thinks here of the words of Paul in I Corinthians 3:10-15 in which he says that we all must build on the foundation of Jesus Christ, whether it be gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, or stubble, "each man's work shall be manifest ... If any man's work shall abide which he built thereon, he shall receive a reward." Ecclesiastes tells us that all works done as unto the Lord do abide.

9:7 — "... God hath already accepted thy works", which tells us that the Lord will be pleased with such a life, like the one in the parable of our Lord who heard the Lord say, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant. Thou hast been faithful over a little, I will entrust to thee much." (see Luke 19:17)

Toward the end of the message of Ecclesiastes, we are made aware that it is addressed particularly to young people who have yet their life of service, for the most part, ahead of them. An exhortation is given in the form of a warning: "walk in the ways of thy heart, and in the sight of thine eyes; but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment." (11:9) Here the writer is saying that if the youth ignore the counsel of this book, then they will have to answer to God and not to men. He therefore further exhorts: "Remember also thy Creator in the days of thy youth ..." (12:1). Remember indeed your Creator and for what He has created you!

But while the thrust is to those in their younger years, challenging them to give a whole life in service to God, it is nevertheless just as applicable to any of us who are God's children and are engaged in any task, any job, and any profession which is not itself illegal in God's sight. We are all challenged by this Book to give that job to the Lord to be done for Him and for His glory, so that every area of our lives might be brought under subjection to the Lord and so that the best hours of our lives might not be given merely to holding down a job, but to doing a service for the Lord.

You might say, "My job doesn't lend itself to being a spiritual work. It is dull and without challenge. I just do it in order to make a living and keep a roof over our heads."

I say that God can change all of that without your changing your job. If you think your job is

routine and dull, then consider the counsel of Paul to those who were bond-servants — slaves, if you will — to pagan Roman owners. They had no choice of what they could do. They had little hope of material rewards for doing even a good job. It was their duty to serve the whims and fancies of their overlords. Yet to them Paul says: "Slaves, be obedient unto them that according to the flesh are your masters, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ; not in the way of eye-service, as men-pleasers; but as the slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; with good will doing service as unto the Lord, and not unto men; knowing that whatsoever good thing each one doeth, the same shall he receive again from the Lord, whether he be bond or free' (Eph. 6:5-8).

We cannot conceive of a more irksome job than being a slave to another. Yet, Paul here challenges the Christian slave to do all he does as unto the Lord, seeing it as a service for God. He is therefore to do it with a willing heart, and in good will.

Here Paul again writes the same things to the Colossians: "Slaves, obey in all things them that are your masters according to the flesh; not with eye-service, as men-pleasers, but in singleness of heart, fearing the Lord: as unto the Lord, and not unto men ... ye serve the Lord Christ," (3:22-24)

If we cannot see the best part of our working week as belonging to the Lord, then we cannot ever be full-time in service to the Lord. But the job you have with the abilities you have to perform that task is given of the Lord and He will hold you accountable to Him for it. "For God will bring every work into judgment, with every hidden thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil."

We must see then, that the eternal life God has given us is more than just a linear life, lasting forever. It is now, and it is more than endless; eternal life is a quality of life, a life lived before God and enjoyed in His presence with the sense of doing all that we do for the Lord. What cannot be done for the Lord ought not to be done at all.

But here, a word of caution. We cannot please God without faith, for without faith, it is impossible to please God (Heb. 11:6). One cannot hope to do a full-time service for the Lord unless first he has believed on the Lord Jesus Christ. Many seek to take a short cut, supposing that they can please the Lord by what they do and therefore be acceptable to God on that basis. Far from it, we must first come to the Lord in repentance and faith and then, being justified by our faith, we stand ready to serve the Lord (Eph. 2:8-10).

This leads us then to a further reflection on the attitude of the doer or the motivation of our service in God's Kingdom. Just as works without faith are not good works at all, so work done grudgingly, without joy in the heart and work done only while things go well externally, is not pleasing to God either. We must see that it matters not only what we do as God's children but why we do it and with what attitude. The words of Paul: "God loves a cheerful giver" apply not merely to what we put in the offering plate on Sunday, but also to the life we give to Him daily as well.

THE IMPORTANCE OF JOY IN THE SERVICE WE DO FOR THE LORD

You have noted that as the writer of Ecclesiastes spoke of the labor done for the Lord it was always in the context of joy. Joy is not just a smiling face, it is a heart-felt happiness, grounded in our very relationship to the Lord. Joy is frequently mentioned in the Old Testament as that which God expects to find in His children as they live and serve Him. But it is just as often mentioned in the New Testament.

Our Lord, just before his betrayal and death, spoke quite frequently of his joy and his desire that the disciples learn to have that same joy in their service to the Lord. Jesus could speak of his joy even in the face of his knowing that soon he would be betrayed by one of the Twelve and that soon he would be delivered into the hands of the Romans by his own people and that soon he would be alone to face death, not for his own sins but for the sins of others — of us. Yet, he spoke of his joy (John 15:11) and of his desire that his joy might be in them also (John 15:11; 16:22,24; 17:13). Later, Paul calls joy one of the chief fruits of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22,23).

In the Old Testament, Joel in particular, introduces us to the importance of joy when, in his prophecy, he addresses himself to the circumstances existing in the church of his day, spiritually.

Joel prophesied sometime shortly after a terrible locust plague had swept through the land, devouring everything. The effect of that plague on the land had been to bring all into despair and mourning over the loss of their crops (Joel 1:8-12). This was understandable. Nevertheless, there was a greater concern to Joel than the loss of all things material. That was the loss of joy (1:12,16).

You see, the joy of God's children could not be dependent upon external circumstances going well. If, when the crops failed, the people's spiritual joy in serving the Lord also failed, then it was indicative of the fact that their joy was not real joy, for its base was not in a heart that was right with the Lord, but rather the apparent joy was dependent upon things going well externally. This ought not to be.

Therefore, we find Joel here calling the people to repentance and to return to the Lord so that their joy might be restored. Without that joy, there could not be any real service to the Lord. They had been living in sin before the Lord, engrossed in their jobs, not as a service to God but for their own pleasure — a job for the job's sake, not as a service to God (1:13-15; 2:12-14). Note how, in the latter passage, Joel shows that the problem was a heart problem and recalls to them that revelation which Moses had been given in Exodus 34, as the sole basis for their return to the Lord and return to joy in service before Him.

In a similar way, David, after his sin in the matter of Bathsheba, felt the loss of this same joy and cried to God to restore that joy to him so that he could in turn serve the Lord as he ought (Psalm 51:12-13). One part of David's life had not been surrendered to the Lord and it led to other sins which finally broke his heart and brought him back to the Lord. But without that reconciliation, without that sense of service to the Lord in joy, David knew that he would not be able to be a leader of God's people at all.

Finally, we look at the prophet Habakkuk. He, while seeking to serve the Lord, was overwhelmed by the extent of sin and evil in his day all around him. He cried out to God to do something about it (1:2-4). When God told him that He was going to punish those evil doers in Jerusalem by the army of the Chaldeans, Habakkuk was even more distressed (1:12-2:1). Joy had gone out of Habakkuk's life, though he was surely a child of God.

At this point, the Lord had to teach Habakkuk and all of us, that our peace and joy and life

before God is based, not on outward circumstances going well as we wish they would, but rather, on our faith in the Lord. The just (righteous) shall live by his faith (2:4).

The Lord went on to show Habakkuk that God must bring judgment against sin and sinners, both in the pagan world and also in the church (in this case, in Judah, or what was left of it) (2:6-20). This meant that there would be awful turmoil in the church and in the world. But the child of God should not lose his joy in serving the Lord simply because of this. Our joy in serving the Lord cannot be based on all going well externally. Even in the midst of the greatest trials and hardship, in the world or in the church, God's child must be at peace with the Lord and in joy as he goes on serving the Lord.

This, Habakkuk finally grasped in the light of God's revelation to him. In the last chapter we hear him praise God saying "Though the fig tree shall not flourish, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labor of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no food; the flock shall be cut off from the fold and there shall be no herd in the stalls: Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation. The Lord is my strength; and he maketh my feet like hinds feet, and will make me to walk upon my high places." (3:17-19)

How beautifully Habakkuk has caught God's message. How different from those in Joel's day, who could only rejoice when all went well. Their joy was not real because the labor they did was not for the Lord and could not last. Habakkuk's spirit must be our own as we undertake to be God's image-bearers in the world, in the face of much sin and much opposition and much judgment from God on the world and on the sinful church.

By illustration we might look at two New Testament events which teach the lessons taught here. One is the incident in which Jesus and the disciples were on the Lake of Galilee. While they were there, a storm arose and the disciples were frightened. They found Jesus sleeping peacefully in the midst of the storm and they awoke him and spoke to him rebukingly (Matt. 8:23-25).

First, Jesus rebuked them for their fear and lack of faith. Then he calmed the waters for them (vs. 26). Why did he rebuke them? Because, though in the storm, they had Jesus; and that ought to have been enough. But it was not. They had to have the sea calmed as well (had to have all of the externals peaceful). God's child must learn to live in the midst of the storm, whether a real, literal storm or the storms of life, but at the same time, retain his peace and joy, those fruits of the Spirit, those attributes of God, which are to be manifest in God's children. They must never be dependent on outward circumstances going well, for they must be rooted and grounded in our faith in the Lord.

Later, we find Paul in a similar storm, though apparently much greater, being on the Mediterranean Sea, (Acts 27:27-44). This time, God's child stands in faith and calm in the midst of the storm. The external situation was bad, but God's servant, though a prisoner, acted with such calm and command of the situation that though the ship was destroyed, all aboard were saved from drowning. Here Paul shows the joy and peace that is rooted in Christ and not in what happens in the world.

All of this is to say that as we speak of being God's image-bearers in a sinful world and of doing all that we do on our job as a service to God, we are not to suppose that this means that all will be well externally. We may have to suffer some real losses for doing all that we do as unto the Lord. We may have to endure ridicule at times. We may see others promoted above us and we may be cheated on occasion. The world will not love us the more for our doing all, as we do it, for Christ. The world's standards are not our own and their motives are not the same as ours. Conflict and turmoil may result.

Therefore, as God's servants, we must have our joy and peace, these evidences of the image of Christ in us, anchored in our relationship to God and not in the approval or reactions of the world to what we do and the way we do it.

Ours is the call to do what we do in such a way that the Lord will be glorified and not men, not even ourselves. We are to do what we do using every talent God has given to us to do the very best job we can, whether or not men see fit to reward us for the labor we do and the special effort we put into it for Christ's sake. It is a commendation from God of our faith when He calls us to work in the midst of great hardship and to do the job we do, no matter the trials, with joy and peace of heart. This is what Peter calls the trial of our faith and he calls us to rejoice in it (I Pet. 1:6-9).

We have now shown that God has a clear design for His people which He has expressed throughout Scripture and which is best summarized in Ephesians 1:4. We have also shown that as that design was applied to the people whom God called in the Old Testament times, the Israelites, it required them to be holy (belonging exclusively to the Lord) and to show His Lordship in their lives by bearing His image gloriously — not just in times of convocation and worship but also in their daily work in what they did for Him and in how they did it, and in the attitude of their hearts as they did it.

This is all very well, we say, but what does it mean in terms of a life actually lived? Was it just so much theory without example? Let us again return to the Word of God for help.

JOBS SECULAR AND JOBS SPIRITUAL – IT DEPENDS ON YOU

It is usually helpful to see what we are talking about in terms of flesh and blood. When we can find a flesh and blood example from Scripture, all the better. Let us therefore look at two children of God: one who managed to make a potentially "spiritual" service into a secular job; and one who took a "secular" position and made of it a spiritual service.

A. Jonah: Doing a Spiritual Assignment in a Secular way.

As we consider the experience of Jonah, it is hoped that we can see more clearly what is involved in doing a job in a spiritual and not a secular way. We need to see that it is not so much the nature of the job that is spiritual or secular, but the motivation and attitude of heart of the one doing the job that determines whether, in the end, the job was spiritual or secular (done for the Lord or not).

We do not know much more about Jonah than what we know from this Book. We do not know whether his attitude ever changed or not. We can hope that it did and that what we learn from this experience, Jonah also learned.

His assignment from the Lord, his portion from God, certainly had great potential for being a spiritual service and one in which Jonah himself could receive much joy. He was called upon to go and preach to the city of Nineveh which was wicked, so that they might hear God's call and repent and be saved from destruction. It was, in short, a missionary assignment. We call such assignments very obviously spiritual assignments. It had very obvious relationship to the Kingdom of God. It also showed evidence of the compassion of God for sinners in accord with the kind of God the Lord had revealed Himself to be to Moses long before (Ex. 34:6,7).

But Jonah, although chosen for this most important job, was unwilling to do what he did for the Lord. Indeed, he did not wish to do the job at all (1:3). He therefore fled from God's presence, or at least he thought that he did. He, who had been called by the Lord before the foundation of the world to be God's child and to walk in and enjoy the presence of God, was actually acting like the unbeliever and seeking to hide from God. It was because he did not see the job the Lord had given to him as an opportunity to please God. He desired in this matter only to please himself.

In the rest of chapter one we learn how the Lord overruled Jonah's intention to flee from his assignment, and brought Jonah into the midst of the sea, into a situation in which he desperately needed the Lord's compassion and help for himself.

God showed that compassion by preparing for Jonah a great fish to rescue him from drowning. Jonah himself testifies of how the Lord saved him from sure death as he sank into the midst of the sea (2:2-9). In the testimony, Jonah readily recognized God's love and care for him. He also saw the folly of his seeking to run from God. It was like running away from the only hope of mercy (2:8). Jonah pledged and vowed to do what God wished him to do (v. 9).

True to his word, when God commanded Jonah again to go and to preach in Nineveh, he obeyed — in the letter — but not in spirit (3:1 -4). What a wonderful thing happened as he preached! God turned the hearts of the people to the Lord and to repentance; and because they did repent, God spared the great city.

It ought to have been a time of rejoicing for Jonah to see how the Lord had effectively used his service to save a vast city of people from destruction (3:5-10).

But instead of joy, Jonah was displeased. In fact, he was angry. He knew quite well what God was like: gracious, merciful, slow to anger, abundant in lovingkindness, just as God before had shown to Moses (4:2). But knowing God as God had revealed Himself to be, did not mean

that Jonah was, in his own life, an image-bearer of that same God before the heathen world. Since he was not pleased with God's assignment to him, though he did it in a perfunctory manner, he received no joy in the labor — only sorrow and frustration. So it is with any who are not willing to take the job God has given to them and make it into a spiritual service to the Lord. As a result, Jonah saw his whole life as empty and vain and wished to die. He was, at this point, in outlook, not unlike Solomon, as we read in Ecclesiastes.

God's question to Jonah was: "Doest thou well to be angry?" (4:4). That anger ought to have been a warning to Jonah that something was terribly wrong in his heart. But he had not yet learned.

Therefore, the Lord, still longsuffering, sought to show to Jonah again what it means to know the compassion of God and what it would mean if that compassion were withdrawn. He gave to Jonah a little shade for a short time, then took it away (4:6-8). By means of this, the Lord sought to teach Jonah that his whole sense of values had gone awry and that he had utterly failed to glorify the Lord in his life.

Jonah was angry again, and this time, the Lord scolded him, showing that while Jonah had become very happy over a little shade, (something that pleased him) he was in turn very angry over the salvation of thousands of people (something that pleased the Lord) (4:9-11).

Jonah is a prime example of a child of God whose sense of values has become perverted so that he can rejoice only when things please him, but be angry when things please the Lord. He totally failed to bear the image of the Lord before the Ninevites. He did what God told him to do; but though he did it, he did not do it as unto the Lord, in loving service to God. In short, God used Jonah to get His work done. He would not be foiled by Jonah's reluctance to please Him. Nevertheless, in the doing, Jonah received no joy and no blessing. He had managed to take a spiritual assignment and make it into a secular job, so far as he was concerned.

In this, he was perhaps like the elder brother in the Prodigal Son parable. He dutifully did all that his father expected of him, but he did it grudgingly. He never enjoyed the doing of it for his father, to please him. He complained therefore that he had not enjoyed being with the father (Luke 15:28-30). The father's answer to his elder son would have been appropriate for Jonah as well (15:31,32).

We learn from this that we cannot assume that just because the job we receive from the Lord is called, by most, a spiritual job, that it will therefore automatically be done as a spiritual service to the Lord. Those of us who are preachers, Bible teachers, Sunday School teachers — or even I, as I write this study — cannot assume that we are automatically doing what we do as a service for the Lord. We may, because of the wrong motivation of our heart, be making a secular job out of a spiritual opportunity.

B. Daniel: Doing a Secular Assignment in a Spiritual Way.

The case of Daniel is quite different from that of Jonah. Daniel was a slave, a captive of the Babylonian Empire, who was forced away from his home and into the city of Babylon, to be used in whatever way the King of Babylon determined. We are told of this in the first chapter of Daniel (vs. 1-2).

The king determined that Daniel, his three friends, and a whole host of others, many of them presumably Hebrews but also from other lands as well, were to be trained in all of the learning of Babylon in order that they might serve the king well in his ruling of the land. They were also to be Babylonized (trained and indoctrinated into Babylonians). To do this, not only were they to be taught the Babylonian language and learning (v. 4) but also their names were changed so that while, in their native tongue, their names expressed some aspect of their faith in the Lord, in Babylonian, their names related them to pagan gods (v. 7)!

Daniel and his friends had no choice in what they would do or where they would do it. Neither could they determine what their names should be before their lords. Nevertheless,

Daniel and those with him determined to express their faith in their Lord in the only sphere in which they could have any control. We read that Daniel purposed in his heart not to defile himself with the king's dainties (v. 8).

He asked for permission to eat a different food from the rest, for him and his friends; perhaps the food was not proper in accord with the laws of Leviticus, or perhaps Daniel was simply keeping in mind the words of Proverbs 23:3,6; or Psalm 141:4. In faith he asked that they be tested whether, on their diet, they did not show forth better and more pleasant countenances than the rest (1:12,13).

Here we need to know that the term "countenance" means more than whether one's face is thin or fat. It has to do with the reflection of one's heart and attitude. When Cain was angry in his heart with God, his countenance fell (was displeasing to God). A fallen countenance therefore reflected anger in the heart, while a pleasant countenance would reflect a good attitude and heart of joy. The servant of the king here was afraid that the meager diet would cause them to have a nasty or poor temperament. Daniel knew better. He trusted the Lord and the Lord did not fail him.

When the test was over, not only did they have better countenances than the rest, but they were also even fatter. They had been faithful in the one little sphere of their life that they could have any control over, what they should eat; and the Lord blessed their faithful stewardship of this small sphere of their responsibility. They were in turn an excellent example of what Jesus meant when He said that those faithful in a little would be entrusted much. Since they were faithful, God gave to them knowledge and skill and wisdom (v. 17) and they were elevated to places of greater responsibility (v. 21).

Daniel and his friends served in what we would call a very secular position, they were advisors to the pagan king in ruling the government of a pagan society. How more secular could the job description be? Yet we see them exercise their responsibilities in a manner faithful to the king: being diligent in carrying out their responsibilities, even blameless in what they did and how they did it in service to the king and to the nation; while at the same time making their jobs a spiritual service to the Lord, for which the Lord received much glory. But their job was not easy for all of this and not without many dangers. Yet, in faith they did what they did as unto the Lord and not as men-pleasers. Let us see how this happened.

1. They depended wholly on the Lord in doing what they did. (chapter two).

Here we learn of Nebuchadnezzar's dream and of his seemingly unreasonable demand that his advisors either tell him what he dreamed and its meaning, or be executed. Where the other advisors threw up their hands calling the task impossible (2:10,11), Daniel, when he heard of the demand, immediately went to the Lord together with his friends, seeking God's help (2:17,18). They knew God to be a God of mercy as He had revealed Himself to Moses, and they relied on God's being just that.

In the end, Daniel was able to do the "impossible thing" that was required of him, and in such a way that God was glorified, so that the tongue of the pagan king praised Daniel's God (v. 47).

2. They would not compromise their faith in doing what they did. (chapter three)

In this chapter we learn of the most unreasonable demand from the king that all bow down and worship the image he had made. When Daniel's three friends refused, worshipping the Lord only, they were arrested and threatened (3:12,15).

The three replied that in reality they need not answer the king in this matter, since the answer lay with their God. They expressed certainty (faith) that God was able to deliver them from the punishment threatened. But they did not know whether He would do so or not. What they did

know was that the Lord would certainly deliver them from the hand of the king: either by rescuing them from the fiery furnace; or through death, by delivering them out of the hands of the king so that he could no more torture them. This was true faith and commitment: they did not know whether they would live or die, that answer was up to God, not Nebuchadnezzar. They did know that God was able to save them from the destruction of the fire and that their destiny therefore rested not in the decision of Nebuchadnezzar but in the decision and will of their God.

As it turned out, they were not burned. God intervened. But even if He had not, still, they had glorified the Lord, remained faithful to Him, not compromised their faith, and taken all the sting out of the king's pronounced punishment. Would that we could all so answer our enemies who threaten us! They did what they did in such a manner, that again a pagan's lips praised God (3:28,29).

3. They boldly testified of the truth while serving the king, (chapter four)

In this chapter, Daniel interpreted another dream of the king. This time, the dream warned of a judgment about to fall on the king because of his pride and wickedness. Daniel told the king the truth, using no embellishments. He also took the occasion to exhort the king to change his ways and do what was right (4:27). Once more, God was glorified (4:37).

4. They stood faithful to God even when opposed (chapter six).

Here, as a final example of God's child living in a pagan and therefore hostile world, we see Daniel consistent in his faith and practice, no matter what the opposition did.

He was faithful to the king throughout. He was faithful to his God throughout. It is the highest commendation of the faithfulness and integrity of the man Daniel that his enemies acknowledged that they could not find one fault in all that he did in service to the king and the people. They had to force him into a position where being loyal to the will of the king would mean being disloyal to his God. This is what the enemies of Daniel succeeded in doing.

When Daniel learned that an edict from the king forbade him to worship his God as he always had, Daniel neither sought martyrdom nor vacillated in his faith. He did what he had always done, he went to pray three times daily to the Lord (6:10).

As soon as his enemies saw this, they had him where they wanted him, or thought they did. He was arrested and sentenced to be cast in the lion's den. The king knew he was loyal and undeserving of this punishment. Already the king was angry with those who had tricked him and brought Daniel into this danger. Their sentence was sure. Even had Daniel died in the pit, the king doubtlessly would have destroyed Daniel's enemies (6:16-18).

Once more, God's servant did his "secular" job in such a faithful way that the king found him faultless in all that he did; and once more, by his doing it that way, God was glorified (6:25-27).

Each of us stands just where Jonah did or where Daniel stood: faced with some commitment from the Lord, a job to be done. Whether we make of that opportunity a spiritual service or a secular job depends not so much on what the job is but on how we do it, particularly, what our motive is in the doing of it. This responsibility the Lord has put into our hands.

Before each one of us, therefore, is the challenge of God's Word to invest our life, all of it, to the service of the Lord and therefore to become full-time Christian servants. But we need help in doing so, for as we have seen, it does not come automatically merely because we wish it to. Every realm of our lives must be claimed for the Lord and we must see the world and life around us as that to be conquered for Christ and given in service to Him.

It is to that help which is readily available to each of us and indeed essential to each of us that we next and finally address ourselves now.

CHRISTIAN SERVICE AND THE WORD OF GOD

God, calling us into partnership in service in His Kingdom's work, has not sent us out unequipped for the task. Not only has He given to each of us whatever talents and abilities we have for doing the job we are doing as a spiritual service to Him, but He has supplied to us the totally sufficient source for all knowledge, wisdom and understanding in doing what we do for Him. He has supplied to us the spiritual food by which we can grow day by day more and more into the image of Christ. He has supplied to us the Word of all comfort when, as we seek to do His will in the work we do, we suffer or undergo any trial or hardship. In short, He has given to us His inerrant and holy Word, the Word of God written, the Bible.

We could turn to many passages from Scripture which teach of the importance of the Bible to the child of God. We could talk about II Timothy 3:16,17, which declares that all Scripture is from the Lord and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction in righteousness, so that God's child might be fully equipped for every good work. Or we could speak of the Word as Peter describes it in II Peter 1:19-21, as more sure even than the things which Peter had seen with his own eyes, calling it a lamp in a dark place. He too declared that it all came from God through men who were carried along by the Holy Spirit, so that what they wrote was not the thoughts of men but of God.

But I want us to see that Word as it is described by the Psalmist, using two Psalms: Psalm 1 and Psalm 19.

Psalm One describes the righteous man of God as one who stands in this world, on the one hand resisting the tug of the world with its false counsel and false standards (way) and false attitudes (scoffing) (v. 1) and on the other hand, positively pursuing the way that pleases the Lord, the way we have been talking of in this book (vs. 2,3).

His delight is to learn from God's Word. In order to do this, he learns to meditate on that Word day and night. We need some explanation here. To meditate does not mean to put one's mind in neutral as the term so often is used today. Scriptural meditation has nothing to do with the so-called transcendental meditation of today. Scriptural meditation means earnestly taking that Word of God read and seeking to apply its truth to every facet of our daily lives: our getting up, our going out, the job we do, our coming home, our social life, our recreational life — indeed every area of our life.

We return to the theme of joy, which as we saw before, is so often found in Scripture. His delight is in the application of God's Word to all of his life.

Such a one is here likened to a tree that is transplanted beside the source of life, the streams of water. Such a tree will surely bring forth its fruit (that for which it was made) in its due time and its leaf will always be green and fresh and all that it does will prosper in accord with the wishes of its Maker. So it is with the child of God who drinks deeply of the source of our life in Christ — God's written Word. We shall surely bear our fruit (the image of Christ formed in us) for His glory; and we shall always have that fresh and glowing countenance of the child of God, in joy; and we shall surely prosper in all that God has purposed for us in terms of His high calling to us in Christ Jesus.

We see here then something of the love affair that must develop between the child of God and the Word of God. It is that love and the fruits of such love that we now turn to consider.

We have already mentioned earlier, the first part of Psalm 19. We will focus our attention now on the latter part, where the Psalmist speaks of his own love for God's Word and shows to us its all-sufficiency to meet our every need in spiritual living and growth. In particular, we will

concentrate on just two verses: 7,8. It is here that the Psalmist focuses upon the merit of God's Word and the marvelous gift from God that it is.

He introduces first the most inclusive name for God's Word, that by which we have come to know it as God has given the Word to us in written form: the Law of the Lord (v. 7). The word used here is "Torah", the Hebrew name for God's Word. It embraces more than the actual Law of Moses, but rather includes the whole revelation of God in written form. The word comes from a verbal form which means "to teach" and therefore embraces all that the Lord has taught, i.e., the whole Bible.

He declares this Torah (whole teaching of God in written form) to be perfect, complete, lacking nothing needed by us (v. 7). This truth is beautifully illustrated in the incident of our Lord's temptation, recorded in Matthew 4 and elsewhere as well. We are told how, at the beginning of his public ministry, Jesus was confronted by Satan, who wished to do all he could to prevent Jesus from carrying out his mission. He, therefore, hurled his full strength into the battle against Jesus. From Jesus' point of view, much was at stake. The whole hope of mankind and of those he had come to save rested wholly on his shoulders. He must prove to be perfect in all he did.

Yet, when Jesus was tempted by Satan, he did not rely on any supernatural power or resources of heaven, but wholly on what is available to all of us; he relied solely on God's Word written. Whenever Satan hurled any strong temptation against him, Jesus' reply was to answer him from the Word of God, as though that Word was totally sufficient to meet all of his need. If it was sufficient for our Lord, then how much the more for us.

The Psalmist also speaks of the power of the Torah, teaching of God, as able to restore the soul. This is dramatically brought out in the words of Ezekiel 37 where we see Ezekiel commanded to preach God's Word to a valley full of dry bones. As he preaches, God's Spirit moves over the bones and they become alive again. God's Word, in fact, takes us who are in the state of spiritual death and makes us alive again by rebirth. It is indeed a two-edged sword, able, on the one hand, to bring us under the conviction of death, convicting us of sin; and then, able to bring us to life in Christ. Faith does come by hearing and hearing by the Word of Christ (Romans 10:17).

Next, the Psalmist calls the Word of God the testimony of the Lord, the term is not simply a synonym for Torah or Law. The term "testimony" is particularly reserved in Scripture for expressing that which is often repeated: a kind of summary of the whole revelation, such as the Ten Commandments. It speaks of those brief passages in the whole of God's teaching, which well summarize the rest, or expresses succinctly the whole. They are brief passages, easily memorized, which enable the child of God to store up the Word in his heart and are the basis of his own testimony. In Scripture, the most frequent use of the term in application to the Word of God is "the ark of the testimony" or the ark containing the testimony, i.e. the Ten Commandments, the testimony of all of God's will for His people. Jesus even noted two verses which summed up the Ten Commandments: Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18.

When therefore, the Psalmist says that he has hidden God's Word in his heart, he does not mean, of course, all that God has revealed, but likely refers to such testimonies. In memorizing God's Word, we should particularly remember such like testimonies or brief summations of the whole Law of God, carrying them in our hearts that we might indeed meditate on the Word of God.

The Psalmist declares these testimonies to be sure or certain. The word used here for sure (certain) is the same word used elsewhere in the Old Testament to mean "believe". This teaches us that "to believe" is "to be certain". All too often, when we and others use the word "believe" we use it to mean "I think so". So we say, "I believe he is in the next room", meaning that we think he is, but we are not certain. That use of the term "believe" has carried over into the church

so that many suppose the word "to believe" in reference to their faith also means, not "I am certain", but "I think so".

Such a concept is foreign to the Bible. The Word of God calls not for our "thinking so", but for our "certainty" regarding Christ. The writer to the Hebrews calls faith "assurance (certainty) of things hoped for, a conviction of things not seen." (Hebrews 11:1)

The same Hebrew word used here by the Psalmist is later used by Jesus frequently to express the certainty of something he is teaching. Thus he says frequently: "Verily, verily, I say unto you". In doing so, Jesus is using the same Hebrew word that the Psalmist uses in Psalm 19:7: "The testimony of the Lord is sure". And indeed, we too use that word each week when we sing hymns and when we pray. It is the word "amen", which means, not "we have come to the end of the hymn", or "we have come to the end of the prayer", but rather it means "I have a certainty about what has been said and my certainty rests in the Lord".

The testimonies or brief summaries of God's Word, as given in Scripture, are certain. They will not fail. They can be depended upon, and as we store more and more of them in our hearts, we can move and live in greater and greater certainty as we become not only hearers but also doers of that Word and are truly guided by that Word.

Again, the Psalmist speaks of the power of these testimonies. It is a power to make the simple wise. (v. 7). We need to remember that to be wise in Scriptural definition is to be not only a hearer but also a doer of God's Word. Wisdom consists not merely of knowing God's truth, it requires the doing of it also. One is truly wise who learns to apply God's Word to his own life. Jesus teaches this clearly at the end of the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 7:24-27). The wise one therefore, in contrast to the fool, is not only conscious that God exists but is aware that he must give an accounting of his life to the Lord and so seeks to live as pleases the Lord.

Carrying the testimony of the Lord in his heart as he goes about his daily life, the child of God is changed from being simple (susceptible to the wiles of Satan) into one who is wise — fully armed with the whole armor of God, including the Word of God, the sword of the Spirit (see Ephesians 6:10-17).

Next, The Psalmist calls the Word of God the precepts of the Lord which, in Old Testament usage, means that which is appointed (v. 8). It pertains particularly to the application of the Word in your life. We need to see that God's Law must not only be memorized and put into our hearts, but it must be demonstrated in the way we live. Precepts therefore have to do with the justice of the Lord, i.e., His rulings regarding how we should live in our daily lives.

A good example of these justices or rulings of God, these precepts, is found in the few chapters following the giving of the Ten Commandments (Exodus 21 -23). Here we see the Lord showing just how the Law of God is to be applied to every facet of His child's life. He took the ordinary incidents of life, as one in that day lived his life, and showed how God's Law was applicable to every thing man said and did. While many of the applications of the Law then would seem strange to us now because the world of that day was different from the world of today, nevertheless the principles are the same and we can learn from those applications of God's Law just how we today ought to live. Therefore, though not many of us have oxen today, we do have automobiles; and the same principle of responsibility for what the ox did, applies to us now in terms of what our automobiles may do as we drive them about. The point is, God's Law applies to all men where they live and it is their responsibility to know that Law and to apply it everywhere it has application in their life.

The Psalmist declares these precepts to be right. The word "right" in Scripture is usually applied to that which is right in the eyes of the Lord. That is its most frequent use. When men do what is right in their own eyes, the results are tragic and sinful (see the era of Judges and also Proverbs 14:12; 16:25).

We live today in an era which has been called the era of the "new morality" as though we

have come of age and are sophisticated sufficiently that we do not have to think of things as right or wrong, but can live in a relative situation with no set standard, so that what one might see as wrong would be right for another. But God's Word has absolute standards of what is right and what is wrong and those standards are in God's written Word. The moment Adam and Eve departed from God's standard of what was right and what was wrong and set up themselves as judges of that, they fell into sin and death. Natural man goes on rejecting God's standard and setting up his own. Today much that the Bible calls sin is called by men "right" or at worst, only "a sickness", not sin. We, therefore, who are God's children need a firm standard to guide us through life and to prevent our following the counsel and the way of the wicked. God's precepts are that standard.

The effect of that Word in our lives is that it delights our hearts, just as we read in Psalm One. The term used here "rejoicing the heart" is used in Scripture frequently in such contexts as the effect of good food as one sits down to a meal, or the effects of a victory in battle, or the effects of having a good wife, or a good friend, or of having and enjoying soothing oil or perfume. In all of these cases, the effect is rejoicing, on the part of the one who has or experiences these things.

At this point we might ask ourselves if we have ever rejoiced when we sat down to a good meal of our favorite foods or when we saw our favorite team win in the important football game (or do we remember how we felt at V.J. Day when the long war was finally over), or when we married and received a wonderful partner for life, or when we found a dear friend with whom to share our joys and our sorrows, or when we enjoyed any luxury which we are not accustomed to having? If we have — and I am sure that we all have — then we know the feeling of delight and joy.

Now, the difficult question — do you have that same feeling when you sit down to study God's Word? The child of God ought to, and until he does, he ought to pursue that delight with all of his heart. The Word of God ought to be the greatest delight in our lives. God gave it to rejoice our hearts.

Finally, the Word is called by the Psalmist, the commandment of the Lord (v. 8). The term "commandment", as used in Scripture, particularly has reference to God's will for you in any given situation. Again, in Jesus' temptations, we see this beautifully illustrated. There, we see Jesus searching through God's Word in his mind for just the right word to apply to each temptation. For each temptation there is just the right Word of God to enable us to resist it.

It is interesting that in both the Old and New Testaments, the word for "sin" literally means "to miss the mark". Well, the commandments of God are given in order to enable us "to hit the mark", i.e., to do what is right in God's sight.

The Psalmist here assures us that we can count on God's commandments to us, His children, to be pure. They are without any contamination of men. It is interesting that he should say this, for in recent years the purity of God's Word has been challenged on all sides. First the higher critics questioned not only its purity but even whether it was God's Word at all. They saw much human corruption in the words of Scripture. Then, the so-called neo-orthodox reaction against higher criticism tried to re-define what "Word of God" really meant, avoiding a definition which would exactly identify it with what is actually written in Scripture, so as to avoid many of the embarrassments found in the Bible, as they supposed. More recently, the neo-conservatives are still debating just what "inerrant" means, apparently in some hope of avoiding having to say what the Scripture plainly says of itself — it is pure.

There is so much that is false taught in the name of the church today, that we must rely on the Written Word of God as the only perfect, sure, right and pure word and the only reliable base for our faith and practice.

If I were to take off my glasses now, I would see the lines of the type-written page before me

only as a blur. But when I put on my glasses, the words become clear and distinct. The Psalmist declares in closing, that God's Word is that way, enlightening the eyes. If we try to look at life and at the challenge of God to us to be His image bearers and to carry His name gloriously before the world, doing our job as a service to God, without the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament, we are like I am without my glasses. But when we use the spectacles of God's Word, all comes into focus and all makes sense.

With the Psalmist's expression of his own love affair with God's Word and his own subsequent testimony of the place of that Word in his life (read Psalm 19:10-14), we humbly undertake to design a series of studies that will enable us to become better students of that very same Word.

To do this, we have planned a total of 26 quarters of study in the Word of God, beginning with two quarters of survey for a quick overview of what is in the Bible. This will then be followed by a detailed study of briefer passages of God's Word in accord with the outlines we established in the survey lessons. Each quarter there will be 13 lessons, the last one being a review lesson of the whole quarter's work. This will make it possible to use the quarterlies in a variety of different ways: as Sunday School curriculum, as curriculum for special Bible study, as an aid to private Bible study — for weekly or for monthly use (In the latter case, the review lesson would be review of the year's study).

Each lesson will include discussion of the text covered, the stating and use of principles of interpretation, helpful background information in history, geography and archaeology, consideration of the meaning of the passage for those to whom it was first given and of its significance for us today. Finally, suggestions for meditation and personal application will be included in each lesson.

There will also be a teacher's guide for each quarterly, prepared separately and made available through the Christian Education office, which will include a discussion of points to be emphasized in each lesson, discussion of the central point of the lesson, a special treatment of any points of difficulty in the passage with insights into the meaning and use of selected important Hebrew and Greek words found within the text. I shall also include my own reflections, as the writer, on the passage as I see its application to my own life, as a help and encouragement to the teacher to do the same in the classroom.

It is hoped that the lessons proposed will lay a good foundation for more specialized study to follow in subsequent years. In the process of teaching this Biblical content and its significance for us, we shall also deal with many areas of church and Christian life and knowledge: theology, (the teaching about God), soteriology (the teaching about salvation), anthropology (the teaching about man), etc.; higher criticism, textual criticism, etc.; philosophy of history, history, science, commitment, responsibility, etc.; Biblical view of missions, of witnessing, of bearing God's image, etc.; the meaning of faith, love, holiness, and the like.

It is our hope, through this Word to which we are unreservedly committed, and through these lessons to follow, to be able to assist you, as together we explore God's Word, in pursuit of God's great purpose, that we all, who are chosen in Christ, be holy, without blemish, in His presence, in a bond of love, both toward the Lord and toward one another. We hope, as we study God's Word through these quarterlies, that we will be able to aid you in being God's faithful image-bearer before the unbelieving world, doing the job you do daily in such a way that men may know that you are God's child and thereby opening doors for you daily to be His witness to those around you. This is our hope and to this task we commit ourselves in Christ.