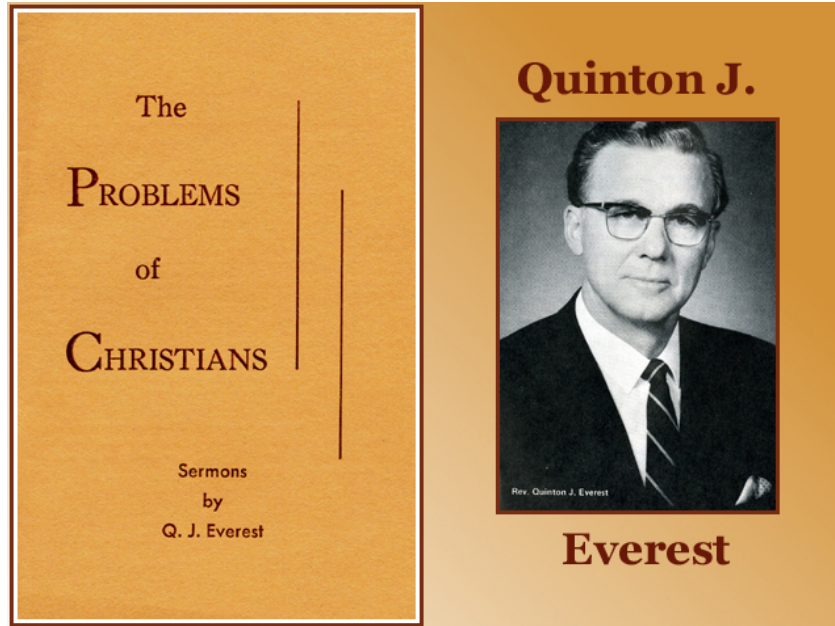


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THE PROBLEMS OF CHRISTIANS
By Quinton J. Everest



Messages for July 7-28, 1963

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Dear Worship Hour Listener,

Greetings in Jesus' name! We realize of course that there has never been a time when problems were non-existent, but no doubt in this day, they are at least in some respects, multiplied. This book of course is very limited when it comes to dealing with problems of Christians, when one thinks of the entire sphere of Christian activity. I have tried to present a few pertinent things that I felt needed to be emphasized in this hour in which we live. I trust that as the Lord has blessed the spoken word over the broadcast, that He likewise will use these printed pages for your enrichment and instruction.

Your continued prayers for the blessing of the Lord upon the Worship Hour will be much appreciated.

Thank You Very Kindly And May God Bless You,
Your Worship Hour Pastor, Quinton J. Everest

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01 -- CHRISTIAN PURITY

Today a great, number of people have openly returned to the degraded pagan views of moral purity and chastity as it existed during the time of Paul and his fellow apostles. Rome, Athens, Corinth, and other centers were shot through with the impurities of heathenism. Men had departed from the sturdy piety of their better forefathers. The world was morally bankrupt. The demands of the masses were for food and shows. They lived in vulgar idleness, perverting themselves by unspeakable vices. They contended that fornication was a matter belonging in the same class as eating, drinking, and sleeping and that anyone indulging was only following a legitimate requirement of nature. The individual conscience of great masses of people no longer reacts reprovably with relation to the iniquity of adultery, fornication, divorce, and other vices of our age. Divorces have become so numerous that we expect them. We are almost more surprised at the continual stability of married couples than we are at the wholesale dissolution of marriages. To many people it seems to be more amazing if couples are true, rather than untrue to each other.

What is the reason for this great desire for sensual gratification, ease, luxury, and pleasure? Unquestionably we are facing a problem that is certainly complex and disheartening. For the well-being of our nation, our churches, and certainly our homes, we must have the virtues of love, self-sacrifice, thrift, piety, sympathy, and faith in Christ. Man seems to desire only to live and enjoy the things which are

physical and earthly. He has lost his sense of responsibility to God and forgotten the fact that his first and supreme sacrifices should be to Him. Young people observing the decline and the degradation are wondering what is really worthwhile. If the older people feel no horror at sin, why should they? Smutty magazines, books, stories, art, people, and even smutty religion have found their way into our society with an amazing toleration. It is not often that one speaks in this strain, but I do so with the desire that some of you will listen gratefully and that the precious seed of moral purity may be planted and will sprout into pure life, bearing excellent fruit.

The great Apostle Paul carried the message of the Gospel, which is a message of purity, into the most degraded areas of the world, and as a result of the mighty outpouring of the Holy Spirit, tremendous things we're accomplished. As God's inspired apostle, we can draw upon his words to give us counsel and guidance in the perplexing matters which face us today.

In I Corinthians 6 we discover that the Corinthians had tolerated disgraceful vices against the divine commandment of chastity. Paul therefore warns them that fornicators, adulterers, effeminate persons, and other similar offenders will not inherit the kingdom of God. In no uncertain terms he declares that their sins make this earth a Sodom of infamy and that their everlasting punishment will be in perdition with the devil and all his angels. He declares that while food is for the body and the body is for food, the body is not for fornication, but for the Lord Who has created, redeemed, and sanctified it. This very body, says Paul, will one day be raised up and presented to the Lord for eternal life in glory. Paul closes his plea with the words, "For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's." As Christians we have been purchased with the price of His holy, innocent blood; hence, we belong to Him, and throughout our lives we are to glorify Him. Since the body of the Christian is the temple of the Holy Ghost, Who dwells in believers, they are no longer their own, but belong to God and are subject to His will and direction.

The question then comes to us as to what we can do for this world which has gone mad after sin, iniquity, impurity, and immorality. The answer is -- the power of the Gospel of Christ. In the midst of an almost hopelessly polluted generation, those sturdy, confessing, obedient, holy followers of Christ, became a leaven, saving thousands and tens of thousands from the pit of destruction. If even the people today who are genuinely Christian would wholly consecrate and dedicate themselves to the Lord to be filled with, and directed by, the Holy Spirit, and if this group of Christian people would stand united on the Word of God, rebuking what is vile and pointing out what is praiseworthy, I believe there would come into our land, a leaven of righteousness and holiness which would begin to arrest the general moral decay which we see on every hand.

The Existence Of Christian Purity

Briefly now, let us consider three things with relation to Christian purity. First, I want to say that there is such a thing as Christian purity. There are people who will ridicule and perhaps even contradict this statement, but to the Galatians Paul writes:

"Walk in the Spirit and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh," Galatians 5:16. You may ask why I speak of Christian purity instead of just purity. My answer is, for the simple reason that the kind of purity we need is not the kind that has become popular. There is a measure of divine law written in the hearts of men who do not know Christ. Even on their part, there is at least a measure of consciousness and conviction of the value of purity and chastity, but they are certainly far removed from the standards of God's Holy Word. The Pharisees had a righteousness, but Jesus said, "... except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven," Matthew 5:20. The righteousness of the Pharisees was outward. It consisted merely of the act and not the thought, desires, dispositions or attitude. As long as a person didn't become too offensive in violating the law outwardly, the Pharisees regarded him as guiltless, no matter how sinful the thought or desire.

I believe as one analyzes conditions today, he will find the righteousness of non-Christian men, much the same. It's more of a concern for the act and not so much the heart. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus very definitely demands purity of thought, desires, words, dispositions, and attitude. He describes it in that wonderful Beatitude when He says, "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God," Matthew 5:8. The indispensable factor is an inward purity, a spiritual holiness. The worm inside will destroy the apple, even if the apple looks good from the outside. The sewer remains a sewer, even if its odor cannot be detected. Jesus warned of whited sepulchres -- that is, of hypocrites who indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but within are full of dead men's bones and uncleanness. He speaks also of hypocrites who clean the outside of the cup and platter, but within are full of extortions and excess. Mere religious externalism is something which God hates. The heart must be pure through faith in Christ Jesus and the cleansing of the Holy Ghost before there can be any real cleanliness of acts, and so I say unto you, Christian purity involves that which is inward, that which is wrought by the Holy Ghost through faith in Christ Jesus.

When one turns to the Old Testament he has a very good example of genuine Christian purity in the person of Joseph. The devil had plenty of bad people around this boy. Joseph represented the courageous person who had the grit to stand up against that which is wrong, vicious, and evil. It made no difference whether he was living in the depths of a dark prison or in the luxury and wealth of a beautiful palace. He had within a God-implanted power which enabled him to live victoriously and gloriously wherever he was. In spite of the luxury-loving, adulterous wife of Potiphar who laid before Joseph a most dangerous type of inducement to evil, yet he proved himself a remarkable Gibraltar of purity against the wiles of this wicked individual. If the case of Joseph proves anything, it is that there is such a thing as Christian purity, that God-implanted quality which is inward and spiritual. This

inward, spiritual purity of Joseph is heard in his glorious statement, "... how then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?"

Joseph could not commit adultery with this woman for the simple reason that he had an inner purity which would not permit his outer actions to go counter to God's desire. He enjoyed a living, holy communion with God. His faith was not dead, not merely external, not just a matter of mere formula, but something which was very much alive. It was vital, sincere, and true. When we have this kind of an inner quality, it will enable us outwardly to stand and to gain the victory. There is nothing else in all the world today which will help men and women to live as they ought, except a deep, inner experience of the new birth and then secondly to be wholly consecrated to God and filled with His Holy Spirit. Thirdly, we need to be grounded most profoundly in the mighty Word of the living God, thoroughly understanding His law, having a knowledge of the Holy Gospel and enjoying a living, triumphant communion with God through faith in Jesus Christ.

Victorious In Temptation

In the second place this leads me to say that when one comes to the place where he has such an experience in Christ, he will be the possessor of an inner power which will enable him to be strong and victorious to defeat temptation. This simple, honest, believing, God-indwelt Joseph, escaped the allurements of the impure woman. To be sure, as a result of this, he was cast into prison, but remember this, even though Joseph was in prison, he was not the one who was defeated. His virtue had triumphed over vice. Observe how Joseph accomplished the victory. All he did was just to use the simple wisdom and methods given in the Word of the Lord.

To the Corinthians Paul says, "flee fornication." Joseph did just that. He avoided this wicked woman and then also preached her a little sermon, endeavoring to appeal to her conscience, to her sense of right and wrong. He reminded her of what she owed to her husband and what Joseph himself owed to Potiphar. To her, Joseph said, "... neither hath he (that is, Potiphar) kept back anything from me but thee, because thou art his wife." Then he appealed to God by asking the question, "... how then can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?"

I say unto you, what a glorious victory! What a change would come in our nation and throughout the world, if every man and woman had the God-given moral courage, purity, and stamina to say, "How can I do this wicked thing and sin against God?" Husbands would cease being untrue to their wives. Wives would cease being unfaithful to their husbands. Young people in our schools, high schools, colleges, and universities would live lives of purity, rather than of degradation and fornication. There would be less tears and broken hearts, less people sinking into the grave before their time, ruined in body and soul. There would be less children born with sick bodies and diseased brains just because fathers and mothers did not

give them the chance to be born into the world as healthy individuals. I say, in practically every way that one can think about, our world would be far better off if purity and holiness were to gain the victory every time.

Hear me again, my friend -- your faith in Jesus Christ is the victory! Where this faith is, there is love for God and for the neighbors. I am sure I speak to some of you who cry out for this kind of purity and holiness. Let me say, you can have it as your personal possession, for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth! Socrates, the wisest of the Greek philosophers, once prayed, "I pray thee, O God that I may be beautiful within." It is my prayer that you, as you listen to this broadcast, will pray in the name of Jesus Christ that you may be beautiful within -- pure, chaste, and victorious.

The Rich Reward

Finally, let me say that there are times as I've already indicated, that Christian purity may have to suffer, but yet in the end, it will be richly blessed. For a while it seemed in Joseph's experience as if evil would triumph over good. He was imprisoned in the king's own, hard prison. The evil woman had her way. Joseph had triumphed over her morally, and she was triumphing over him physically. We do not find that in this deep trial, there was anyone who stood with Joseph. It seemed that he was very much alone with the exception that the Word says, "The Lord was with him."

I am sure that was enough. Even in prison, that made his life glorious. Even there, because of his faith in God, he soon gained influence and became the manager of all things under the king's prison keeper. Today, Joseph is still blessed because of his purity and holiness. His godly life sheds a fragrance abroad, even through this Worship Hour ministry. God bless Joseph for the lesson he is still teaching us and the millions of people all over the world.

Yes, my listening friends, the road of godliness and purity with the Lord Jesus Christ is a blessed road. There may be some suffering and affliction, but I say unto you, take the way, take the highway of holiness. It may be that through much suffering you will enter the kingdom of heaven, but in the end, the righteous path is always the happy one and the blessed one. Sin and impurity will drag you down to hell. It will cause you to blush eternally with shame, but when in the name of Jesus Christ you rise to conquer, you will reach to the very heavens, and by keeping your faith and confidence in Him, nothing will ever be able to drag you down. Remember virtue is still virtue, and vice is still vice. What is wrong will forever be wrong, no matter how many may be doing wrong. God grant that you and all the people of this generation who need to turn to Christ and repent, will do so and thus experience within, the grace and strength of our Lord Jesus Christ. May God bless you and help you to trust Him, live for Him, and be His child, both now and forever.

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02 -- THE PLEASURE PROBLEM (I Corinthians 10:31-33)

Paul, in II Timothy 3:4 declares that there would come a time when men would be lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God. Why does Paul say this when God has put enjoyment in all of men's activities, no matter whether they are physical, mental, or spiritual? The farmer plows his field and there is joy in that work. The mother bakes a cake and she delights in the task. One man writes a book; another composes a song; another produces a poem, and all these people find pleasure in what they are doing. The world is a place of unnumbered pleasures of various kinds: pleasure of the country, the city; pleasure of youth, of manhood, of old age; pleasure of work, of vacation, of eating, drinking, sleeping, and so on. In all these things God desires that we should enjoy ourselves. The Bible nowhere commands that we should live secluded and associate with no one. We are not asked to lead a life of self-imposed sorrow, distress, and pain, which, as Jesus recognized, leads only to hypocrisy.

Ecclesiastes 2:24 says: "There is nothing better for a man than that he should eat and drink, and that he should make his soul enjoy good in his labor. This also I saw, that it was from the hand of God."

The question then comes: Why is pleasure a problem? To say it frankly and briefly, the devil has the most damnable way to pervert whatever God has given for the good of men and this to ruin man both in this life and that which is to come. Pleasure which is in agreement with God's Word is stimulating, strengthening, and refreshing. In this sense, Paul writes to Timothy: "Every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving: For it is sanctified by the Word of God and prayer," I Timothy 4:4,5. The devil is constantly trying to corrupt and degrade man by substituting the injurious, filthy, vicious, and satanic pleasure for that which is good, clean, and wholesome. For that refreshing drink of cool water, he substitutes the destructive poison of liquor; for the legitimate enjoyment of marriage, the lust of impurity; for the helpful activities of physical exercise, the dreadful horrors of the modern, filthy dance. In fact, when one analyzes the things of Satan, they are not pleasures at all, but merely devil-made nightmares. At first they are alluring and would appear to be satisfying, but finally they become unspeakably, dreadful, many times wrecking both body and soul. The question for some is: How am I going to be able to find my way out of the enmeshed situation of sinful, worldly, devilish pleasure? For others, it is: How am I going to live as God desires?

In the first place let me say that our enjoyments need to serve God's glory. Paul expresses it very well when he says, "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God," I Corinthians 10:31. These words were given to the Corinthian Christians, weak and faulty though they were. The church existed in a modern environment and had become infected with the influences and moral diseases of that ungodly pagan environment. We could say that the

Corinthian church very definitely had a pleasure problem to deal with. It had the drink problem, the sex problem, and the problem of running with the world. Paul was very definite and pointed in his message to them, and yet he did not consider the situation hopeless. At least the majority of Corinthian Christians heeded his admonition, for the church at Corinth continued for centuries as one of the pillars of the early Christian church. It had become outstanding in confessing Christ and spreading His wonderful Gospel. It was an active, aggressive church. Here again, we need to be reminded that the only way to change this modern, sinful world is to bring men back to Christ and to the obedience of the Bible. This is the only way the world can be saved from utter destruction. The only way a man can live happy and blessed is if he lives in harmony with God, His maker and redeemer. Man away from God means sorrow, agony, and distress. Man united to God means happiness, satisfaction, and eventually heaven. We can rest only if we rest in God. Outside of Him, we are forever restless. Only from Him can we receive grace, goodness, and blessedness.

I say, then, let us pray, let us intercede before the throne of grace that men will be brought back to God through faith in Jesus Christ which is the only cure for our pleasure-mad generation. Once a person has become a genuine Christian, he has become a new man and cannot help living to God's glory. His desire is to put God first in every way. To be sure, he is still human and makes mistakes, but as a new man, as a new creature in Christ, this Christian believer makes God supreme in his life, serves Him, obeys, and holds Him in love and esteem. Whatever he may do, he does for God and His glory. Things such as drunkenness, lewdness, fornication, adultery, dancing, ungodly petting and necking, the reading of impure papers, books, and magazines are completely out so far as he is concerned. By ruling these things out of his life, he doesn't miss a thing which is valuable. He recognizes these things as only the devil's bait to drag him down to hell and endless damnation. Some of you are probably asking, with these things ruled out, if there is anything left in life. Our answer is: All the real, satisfying, wholesome things are still available to us. Those things which will keep your conscience sweet and pure are still yours. Those things which make God smile upon you, which make men love you and esteem you, which make you yourself glad and work and serve God, are all made available by God. Someone has said, "Engage in pleasure which glorifies God, and you will enjoy it throughout eternity. But engage in pleasure which pleases the devil, and you will feel sorry for it as long as hell lasts."

The Greek philosopher, Aristotle, said, "Consider pleasures as they depart, not as they come." And so, Christian pleasure will not blight and torture you in the tomorrows, but will continue on, not only in time, but in eternity, in its wonderful enjoyment.

Others

In the second place, in thinking of this matter of pleasures, we must keep others in mind. Paul says, "Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God," I Corinthians 10:42.

This is something which would apply to everything we do in this world -- not only the sacred, but the secular things of life. Paul doesn't mean here that we shall never do anything to make another person angry or that other people will always agree with us in everything we do. Actually, we offend someone if, by false doctrine or by wicked life, we induce that person to do something which is contrary to God's Word and to his God-instructed conscience. If, by your wrong living, you cause someone else to live wrong and sinful and do that which is contrary to God's Word, then you are offending him. There are various phases of this truth which might be explored, but this will suffice as a general statement. God has made us keepers of our brethren; we are not to become their destroyers. Christ died to save men, but if we by our evil actions lead them in the wrong direction, certainly we shall be called into account. I like the spirit of the Apostle Paul when he said, "Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend," I Corinthians 8:13.

In all that we say and do as Christians, our calling, by the help and direction of the Holy Spirit, is to save and not to destroy. This does not take away from my life that which God desires me to enjoy, but only bars me from sinful pleasure, from that which will ruin both me and others for all eternity. It bars me from dishonoring God, from desecrating His name and Word, from despising my parents and neighbors, from doing that which is lewd and unchaste, from stealing, slandering, coveting, drunkenness, and from offensiveness in all things. If I with meditation and definiteness, do that which is wrong, then unless I come to God for mercy, I cannot be saved and continue as His child. Surely, there is nothing worse than causing another individual to lose out spiritually. The rich man in hell was very eager not to have his brothers come into that place of torment. Actually, he was not a changed and converted man, but he was afraid of the accusations of his brethren, of the torment of having them blame him for their damnation. And so I say, how shall we escape the damnation if we mislead even the least person into hell? With Paul's admonition we say, give no offense to anyone.

Salvation

Finally, let me say that everything we do in life or that we refrain from doing, should have consideration with relation to the salvation of the souls of men. Paul says, "Even as I please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved."

Surely this is a wonderful rule to follow. Unquestionably, it rules out sinful pleasure, but it also rules out other things which might hinder the salvation of souls.

The supreme pleasure of life consists in helping others to find Christ as their personal Savior. This was the real purpose of Christ, the Good Shepherd, Who came to seek and to save that which was lost. This is the pleasure of missionaries who go yonder to the darkened areas of the world to tell them of Jesus and His love. Ask a real, genuine missionary of the cross: Are you unhappy? Are you sorry for your choice? You will find that they are some of the most happy people in all the world, for there is happiness in doing God's will.

Listener friend, try this for yourself. Make the great discovery, not necessarily of going to some farther corner of the earth to preach the Gospel and win men to Christ, but of doing that which will help someone, perhaps even in your own household, to come to know Jesus Christ as his personal Savior. Your own soul will be filled with the radiance which is of heaven. The devil is the greatest possible fraud there is. He promises joyous things and then gives bitter ones. He promises life and there is death in the pot. The pleasures of the devil do not endure. They turn stale, sour, and poisonous in a very short time. The drunkard is not happy. The harlot is not happy. The prodigal son ended in the swine pen where he wished to be back with his father in the warmth, love, and provision of his home.

Listener, you will not be happy by seeking and indulging in sinful pleasures. By personal experience and by observation of many lives, I can say to you, definitely, that you can be fully and eternally happy in your life if you will glorify God, if you will do your best in living to serve others and helping men to come to know Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Savior. At this moment, God's true pleasures may not seem interesting, alluring, and satisfying to you, but as you come to know Him, love and serve Him, your happiness and joy will increase and abound. I say unto you, serve God and be happy. Serve the devil and lose out in every way, in this world and in that world to come.

The pleasure problem then is the choice between God and Satan, between the good and evil. Do what God wills, that which is good, and you will find that there are many, many pleasures from which you can choose that will bring you immeasurable and multiplied blessings. May God grant that you may have eyes to see, hearts to believe, and minds to obey. Consecrate yourself to him in body, soul, and spirit-to genuine, Scriptural holiness and righteousness. May God bless you and help you to do so just now, and I am sure that a new, grand, wonderful, and glorious day will dawn for you. May God richly bless you is my prayer.

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03 -- THE PROBLEM OF WORTHY AMBITION (I Peter 4:10)

Many times we think of the word ambition as a perverted desire to gain wealth, power, or distinction, for selfish purposes. Even Christians must guard against ambition in the bad sense of the word, or against the sinful desire to gain money, glory, or luxury merely for their own sake. Ambition is a special gift of God

but can be perverted to wrong uses, so as to destroy ourselves as well as others. The ambition of a Hitler can be used to slash the world with fear and devastation. In this sense, Shakespeare said, "Fling away ambition. By that sin angels fell. How then can man in the image of his Maker, hope to win by it?" Another writer has said, "Ambition is a lust which is never quenched, but grows more inflamed and madder by enjoyment." Still another said, "It is the nature of ambition to make men liars and cheats, to hide the truth in their hearts, and like jugglers, show another thing in their mouths, to cut all friendships and enmities to the measure of their interest, and put on a good face where there is no corresponding good will."

These are some of the pictures which men have given of ambition in its evil aspects. However, there is ambition in a good sense which we can call Christian ambition -- desires which are purified, actually impregnated and directed by the Spirit of God. There is so much pushing, shoving, and striving in this world today which is completely selfish and devilish, that sometimes we almost lose sight of the fact that there are individuals who possess pure desires and are characterized by worthy ambition. I ask you personally, what about the life which you are now investing? What are the seeds of character which you are sowing? What are the foundations which you are laying? What is the pathway into which your feet are walking? Are these things really worthy of you yourself? Are these desires, ambitions, and plans capable of bearing the judgments and testings of eternity? Remember, you are inherently deathless and will have a destiny which will be commensurate with your nature. Just how do you look upon life? Is it to you just one round of pleasure? Is it a day for the five senses and their indulgence? Do you live beyond the realm or within the realm only of sight, hearing, taste, smell, and touch? If these are your confines, and if this is the only thing you are living for then yours is the philosophy of the rich fool, who, contemplating his bulging granaries, complacently setting down the cup of pleasure and wiping his lips with a dreadful unconcern toward the moral values and eternal verities, said to his soul, "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry," Luke 12:19.

But that wasn't the end of the story. God stepped in and said of this fool's philosophy, "Thou fool, this night shall thy soul be required of thee: then whose shall these things be?"

Our ambitions, talents, and desires have been bestowed upon us by God most diligently, This is given to us in the parables of the Savior, concerning the talents when He instructs us that those servants who had doubled their endowments, giving over the gain to Him, received everlasting honor; while the slothful, disloyal servant who concealed his talent in a cloth and buried it in the ground, was deprived of even that one talent, and in addition, was cast into outer darkness. Jesus adds in explanation of the parable, that to him who has, still more shall be given; while from him who has not, even that will be taken which he has. This may seem unjust, but the key to this statement is that only those who have been loyal and industrious in applying their talents and using their ambition for the

glory of God, will receive the reward of God's eternal grace and blessing. I like that grand and glorious statement of the Apostle Paul when he said, "For me to live is Christ," Philippians 1:21.

Also in that wonderful Epistle of Galatians he declares, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me."

Surely it is difficult to find anything more beautiful than this. When men are born again, filled and directed by the Spirit of God, this becomes the sum and substance of their seeking and striving. They live their lives here in this world in the flesh by the faith of the Son of God Who has loved us. When we come to realize this truth in our lives, we are going to be happy here and forever blessed in the great reward of heaven.

Gifts

In our text Peter says, "As every man hath received the gift." Every person is endowed with some kind of talent. Usually with one gift, there are associated other abilities and powers. For example, if a man is eloquent, he usually has a good personality, a good memory, and a winsome speech, and so I say, it is not often, if ever, that gifts come singly or alone. God has given these to us for a purpose. That purpose is to serve Him, to advance His cause. You who are Christians need to be alert and awakened in this area. The cause of Christ is being hindered in many a church and community, simply because people with talent and ability have become lazy and are doing nothing. Doing nothing is the best way of giving the devil a chance to do his best to destroy the kingdom of Christ. Any right-thinking individual will acknowledge of course, that God is the creator of man -- body, mind, and spirit. The Christian, in a very special way, recognizes this to be true. He then so lives that he can glorify God in his body. He gives proper attention to it, refraining from these things which may injure it. I don't need to argue the point that multitudes of people are ruining themselves physically by tobacco, by the horrible stuff called liquor, by indulging in the dangerous, ruinous practice of dancing, or even eating the wrong kind of food or over-eating. Tampering with and abusing the sex machinery which God has given for the propagation of the human race is another means by which many people are becoming physical and spiritual wrecks. In fact, the sinful and hurtful things which multitudes are practicing are certainly of Satan and not of God. As for the Christian, he realizes that these things have no place in his life, since his body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. He has no desire to destroy his health when he knows that God has given it for the purpose of serving Him and His cause.

He does everything possible to be efficient for the cause of Christ. As a steward of God over his own body, he cares for his vitality rather than dissipating his powers by indulging in sin. As I said last Sunday, this is the day when men are

placing a great deal of emphasis on pleasure. God does desire that we should enjoy this life, but not in sinful and perverted ways. Perhaps even far greater and more important are the mental qualities bestowed upon us by God which can be used in His service. In this connection, I think of things like patience. How important that is. Not only patient with oneself, but with others and with God. Another very important characteristic is perseverance. How many have fallen by the way simply because they did not possess stamina enough to continue on in the faith! They became, as we might say, short-winded on the way because of the attitude and action of another. Paul says, "So run, that ye may obtain," I Corinthians 9:24.

Likewise many people fail to reach their goals because of lack of courage. They are afraid. In this realm we could also think of the spiritual talents or gifts, such as kindness, courtesy, happiness, honesty, and above all, love and forgiveness. These are all tremendously valuable and weighty. It is impossible to glorify God and serve mankind in the great cause of Jesus Christ unless we are kind, loving, happy, honest, faithful, forgiving, courteous, and filled and directed by the Holy Spirit of God. I am sure that many of you would do yourselves, your friends, your church, and the cause of Christ in general, a real favor, if you would pray for a rich outpouring of these spiritual gifts in order that you might give God glorious service, for the upbuilding of His kingdom. You may never be great in life; you may even be obscure -- you may never be rich; you may even be poor in this world's goods -- you may never win distinction, but if you are honestly serving Christ, your Savior, and accomplishing the purposes which He intended, with the talents and gifts which He has bestowed, then you will have lived a truly blessed life, no matter whether other men think so or not.

Stewardship

The next thought to which Paul calls our attention is that of stewardship. "As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards," I Peter 4:10. God has given to us; he has done something for us; now we are to do something for Him. We are enriched; so we are to enrich others. Sometimes people have the idea that it is all the responsibility of the preacher or the missionary, but we discover that every Christian is a minister of Jesus Christ to the glory of God. One of life's most certain facts is that of one's influence over another. A man on his dying bed cried out, "Oh that my influence could be gathered up and buried with me." But it couldn't be done. In this case, because of his influence, others had been turned from right paths. Others had been infected with spiritual poison. Minds had been perverted with false philosophies. But now it was too late. Regrets do not change realities. Feathers plucked from the body of virtue cannot be recaptured to reclothe the one who has been driven in moral nakedness from paradise.

A schooner went down. Nineteen persons perished. Why? For one simple reason. Somebody had put a piece of steel in the compass box, and the ship was directed from its course to a fatal collision. There is a story that the jeweler's clock

in the front of his store stopped for a half hour. Mislead by that fact, scores of businessmen and women, doctors, lawyers, and students, hurrying to their appointed tasks, lingered, loitered, and were late. The whole day was thrown into confusion in many offices, hospitals, schools, and other areas. Important engagements were missed. Urgent messages were not delivered. Confusion reigned in a hundred centers because one clock stopped for a half hour.

The question of whether or not you are a Christian is a question for not only you, but for every friend and associate which you have. It is something which you have to consider with relation to your home, business, church, and the society in which you move. As a good steward of Jesus Christ you will be an individual of prayer. Even Christ was faithful in this. He prayed for us. Certainly we should pray for others and for the spread of Christ's kingdom in the world. We also can give of our money. God has given us a plan whereby His cause is to be supported by one-tenth of our income, plus offerings as He directs. Unless we follow Him in these respects, we cannot be good stewards. Then, how important it is that we have a good testimony, live a good, clean, godly, holy, righteous life, speaking forth a good word for our blessed Savior, the church, and the people of God.

We discover that again and again Paul was a man who used the ministry of testimony to encourage God's people. Through his testimony, sinners were convicted and converted. Through his testimony, he also instructed and informed others. If there is any one thing above another which this world needs today, it is a great army of individuals, born again and filled with the Spirit, who will go everywhere testifying of the transforming, regenerating, sanctifying, and keeping power of the Lord Jesus.

Remember, a good steward is a manager, and you as a Christian are to be a manager for Christ -- an administrator for Him to manage His goods, His gifts, and His possessions. You are His: your body, soul, time, health, money -- everything, in fact, which you have is His for His service. Only a short time are we going to be in this world, but it should be a blessed time because it is a time of living for, and serving the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Incentive

In conclusion, let me speak of the incentive for service. It is the love of God. He loved us first; so we love in turn. God has made His supreme investment in mankind. I know of parents who have invested practically everything in their sons and daughters, but these children have turned out to be a great disappointment. Some parents have died of broken hearts as a result of the wrongdoing and wrong living of their children. Listener friend, if you have not come to the realization that God is concerned about you, I trust that in this moment you will realize that His greatest investment was made in your life. I warn you to remember that sin mars, strips, wounds, and destroys. Just as I have said, that proud father, looking upon his son, in whom all his ambition, hopes, desires, and affections were wrapped now

sees him a drunken, profligate, debased, degraded, disgraced outcast. What a great tragedy!

The inspired Word of God warns when it declares that sin will bring forth death. It will separate from God. It mantles heaven with grief. And so I call upon you to turn away from sin. Refuse to wreck God's image in your own life and mar the glory of the eternal Father. Take Jesus Christ as your Savior and let Him be the goal of your service and the incentive in your life. Nothing else in all the world will give you happiness now and yonder in eternity. For you to come to know and serve the Lord Jesus Christ as your personal Savior will once and for all solve and direct you in this matter of worthy ambitions in life. In fact, it ceases to be a question and becomes a petition -- Lord, let me serve Thee as Thy good steward. May God bless you and help you to realize it is my prayer.

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04 -- THE PROBLEM OF TEMPTATION (Matthew 4:1-11)

Ever since sin entered into the world, there has been temptation from the world, the flesh, and the devil. In a testimony meeting in a certain church, a man got up to speak for his Savior. He became a Christian late in life and told how the Holy Spirit had convicted him and when he finally yielded, found forgiveness and a wonderful peace and joy which he had never experienced before. He had been a rough, tough, bad individual. He said when he became a Christian, even the cat knew that some change had taken place. He said the next morning after he had accepted Christ as his Savior and this great change had come into his life, it was necessary for him to make a trip into the little village some distance from his farm. He was walking along the road, happy in heart and thinking about his wonderful Savior. As he approached the little village, he could smell the fumes coming out of the saloon ahead. He couldn't see the place yet, for it was just around the corner, but his keen trained nose smelled it. The odors came out so strong that it caused a fear to come into his heart and mind. Frightened, he wondered how he was going to get by. He had never gone by before, and he thought, 'I always went in, but now I don't want to go in.' He didn't dare to, but what in the world was he going to do? Then the Holy Spirit spoke to him, and he began to pray, "Jesus, you'll have to come along and help me get by. I never can make it by myself." Then in his simple, rather illiterate way he said, "And He come, and we went by, and we've been going by ever since!"

To be tempted is the common experience of humanity. Men sin, not in being tempted, but in yielding to temptation. Even Jesus was tempted. Paul says in I Corinthians 10:13, "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man."

Some feel that God singles out certain individuals to be a special target for extraordinary temptations. This could be true in an exceptional way, but I question

it when it comes to God's general principle of working, for He permits all to be tempted. It must also be remembered that God permits the temptation according to our ability to resist it. He provides a way of escape. He gives us strength to overcome. Correctly speaking, temptation is an allurements to evil or a testing of value. God does not tempt any man in the first sense, but may do so in the second sense. When we are tempted by the devil, he does so in order to develop our wickedness. But when we are tried by God, it is to develop our faith in Him. When God commanded Abraham to slay his son, Isaac, that was a trial of his faith, obedience, sincerity, spiritual disposition, and his religion. God permits tests and trials to come to all of His true children in order that their faith may be strong, more certain, true, that their love may be more radiant, and their hope more beautiful and steadfast. When God in His infinite wisdom sees fit to try our faith, may He then help us to cheerfully and faithfully submit to these tests and trials and triumphantly win the victory.

Let me emphasize still further that if inwardly or outwardly you are tempted to do something against the Bible or against God's holiness and righteousness, against your own conscience, which may be educated by the Bible, you can be sure that this is a temptation to evil sent by the devil to destroy your faith. All such temptations must be defeated by standing firm in faith and immovable on the solid rock of God's mighty Word.

Spurgeon, that great English preacher, once said, "Learn to say no. It will be of more use to you than to be able to read Latin." God help everyone of us to say no to every evil thing to which Satan, the world, and the flesh would tempt us. The person who will say yes to what God says and no to all the devil says will surely remain on the right path, and at last obtain the victory of everlasting glory through faith in Christ Jesus.

While there always has been temptation unto evil, I believe that today it is more dangerous to the church and to the Christian believer than ever before. Christian people are tempted on every side, at every step they take, and at every turn of the road -- in business, pleasure, associations with the world, and associations even with Christians. There are temptations through the newspapers, books, periodicals, television and radio programs, through the smut and the dirt of conversation, by idolatry and desecration of God's name and Word. Wherever and whenever God meets men, blesses them and gives to them His forgiveness, His peace, joy, and blessing, there one finds the devil, the ape of God, as man's persistent evil foe, to do him harm. Our lives are therefore a constant choosing between good and evil, between God and Satan, between right and wrong, between the path which leads to heaven and that which leads to perdition. Every day we have to make moral and spiritual choices.

The ancient Greeks had a story about how Hercules, the young man, had to make a choice between attractive, though vicious, beauty, and plain, severe duty. Beauty promised him wonderful delights, but oblivion so far as his remembrance

after death was concerned. Duty promised him only hard work and self-denial, but after this life a place with the gods. So today sin and holiness are constantly inviting men to choose between heaven and hell. Personally I feel that temptation today is not only extensively greater, but also more subtle than ever before. The great trouble is that the world has seeped into the church and again the church, to a great extent, has embraced the world. In the sixth chapter of Genesis we are told that when men began to multiply on the face of the earth and daughters were born unto them, the sons of God, that is, the Christians of that early time before the flood, saw the daughters of men -- that is, those of the ungodly and worldlings, and they took them wives of all which they chose. In plain words, it means that the church of that time and the world of that time were mingled together so that the church members surrendered their pure and sacred teachings and their high and noble principles of living. This state of things finally brought about the flood, for God in His wrath said, "My spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh," Genesis 6:3, and in the same chapter we read, "God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually," Genesis 6:5.

This very situation prevails today. There is no longer the clear line of demarcation between Christians and non-Christians. Our vicious, deceitful, religious modernism is coming to the place today where it proclaims in the pulpit, the same ungodly doctrines and unholy lives which formerly Voltaire in France and Robert Ingersoll in our own country, championed and disseminated. Of course, this is not true of all Christians, for even today, God has preserved unto Himself "7000 elect" who have not bowed their knees to Baal, but the trouble is that the modernistic wolves appear so much in sheep's clothing that it is hard for people to tell the difference between a true Christian and a modernistic Sham Christian or hypocrite. Too many who profess to be spiritual leaders have no faith, and as a result cannot inspire faith in anyone else for the Lord Jesus Christ. Surely the devil must be smiling in glee at all this, for it greatly helps the building and the confirmation of his vicious kingdom of unbelief, shame, and vice.

Satan's Method

For just a few moments, let us take a look at Satan's method in temptation. We of course wouldn't place ourselves on the high level which Jesus occupied, but nevertheless, the devil tempts every Christian in much the same way as he did Jesus. The devil is clever, and yet he is very stupid. When he has used up his ammunition, you will discover that he is at his wit's end and has to give up. I say this because sometimes Christian people are afraid of the devil, as if he were of unlimited power and could deal with them just as he pleases. This is not the case. Satan is a defeated foe and can tempt us only to the extent that God permits. Through divine power we can have divine victory. The devil tried to get Jesus to abuse His almighty power and His omnipotent strength to go contrary to God's commandment and thus break and transgress it. Jesus was enduring the suffering of fasting for our salvation. When He came to His lowest physically, then the devil

came in to do his work. The devil insisted that Christ, by His omnipotent power, change stones into bread in order that He might have something to eat. Jesus refused to comply with this demand of Satan and declared that man does not live by bread alone, but by every word proceeding out of the mouth of God, which is vital for sustaining our earthly life. Defeated in this assault, the devil took Jesus to Jerusalem and placed Him on a pinnacle of Herod's large, beautiful temple, commanding Him to east Himself down, assuring Him that God would take care of Him, since He had promised Him the help and protection of holy angels. Here Jesus knew, and we need to know, that God protects His people in all their rightful ways of duty in which they honor God and serve His cause, but God has not given anyone the promise of protection and help if he departs from God's appointed ways and follows the devil, the world, and the flesh. Had Jesus cast Himself down from the pinnacle of the temple, He would have done something contrary to God's will and Word. What the devil actually desired Christ to do was to gain popularity of the people by unlawful means.

The devil's third attack on Jesus was very similar to the first, two. He foolishly and blasphemously suggested that Christ should worship him, that is to say, acknowledge the devil as Lord and master of all things. The intimation here is that since man sinned, he had brought himself under the power of the devil so that now the evil foe was his rightful Lord. Unquestionably, it was an outrageous temptation. Very clever, but also very stupid. The devil is a liar and of course would not have restored the kingdom of the world to Christ. His offer implied that if Christ would do this, then He would escape the awful, painful suffering of Gethsemane and Golgotha and win the world back without the death of the cross. It couldn't be anything else but a diabolical scheme and Jesus rejected it at once by saying, "Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve," Matthew 4:10.

Just as Satan tried to tempt and bring to fall our blessed Savior, so he tries to tempt and bring us to destruction. His thrust is always to try to get us to do something against God's Word. He uses the bread and butter question. At other times the popularity question is the temptation, and then at still other times, he tries to get us to avoid pain and suffering. It is true that many times all these things-our daily tasks, our daily associations, and our sufferings are almost more than we can bear. The devil comes and gets people to believe that it is easier to secure daily bread by cheating, to gain popularity by cheating, and to escape suffering by cheating -- at least, by breaking God's Word and refusing to be true to Him. To many people it seems that there is nothing more vital in life than to have an abundance of food, pleasure, popularity, friendship, influence, and above all, of great power. And so here is where the devil makes his great thrust, but I say unto you, as insidious as are the temptations of the devil, they can be resisted by trusting in our blessed Lord.

Overcomers

I say, thank God we can be overcomers. Jesus, to overcome Satan's temptations, applied the Word of God to the temptation which confronted Him. The thing is that we must be sincere. We must be obedient. We must go all out for God and not be just Sunday Christians, but everyday Christians, giving total obedience and not just obedience only in certain areas. We cannot have pet vices on one hand and pet sanctifications on the other. As the Word declares, we need to be wholly sanctified in mind, soul, and spirit. Yes, temptations can be overcome. They need not engulf us. If we fall as Peter did, we fall by our own fault and not by God's decree. Peter fell because he was proud and self-conceited. Judas fell because he loved money. David fell because he was lazy and lustful. When people fall, there is something vitally wrong. They give heed to the flesh and refuse to obey the Word of God. They think carnally and not spiritually.

Then, finally, let me say, it is a wonderfully blessed thing to overcome temptation. When Jesus became the mighty overcomer, we read, "Then the devil leaveth him, and, behold, angels came and ministered unto him," Matthew 4:11. What the devil had offered, Christ refused to take. What the angels offered Him, he received gratefully. To be sure, the devil did not leave Him alone, especially in the garden of suffering, in Gethsemane. But there again, God's angel came from heaven to minister to Him. I say, what a blessed thing it is to overcome temptation. Some have said, "Well, I'll try this thing just once," but hear me, my friend, no one is better off for having once cursed, or once lied, or once blasphemed, or just one time given himself to drunkenness, lewdness, vice, and sin. It is always better that there should be no scar than that there should be one. To be sure, the Great Physician is powerful to heal the disease of sin, but how many there are who look back upon that old scar with unpleasant memories and many times, disastrous results.

So I say unto you today, flee temptation as you would flee from the devil. Seek in the shelter of the wounds of Jesus, that security which will keep your souls unto final salvation. Take heed to the Word of God. Study it constantly. Let it be your joy and your strength. Meditate upon it with prayer. Get its power into your soul, its guidance into your mind, its loveliness into your being. God can make you a light and a tower to other individuals. Your light can so shine before men that they will see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven. To you who may have been overcome and defeated, I say unto you, God loves you. He is interested in you and just now as we conclude this broadcast, if you will acknowledge your need, failure, sin, transgression, or whatever it may be, and will humbly confess and ask His forgiveness, He will graciously and gloriously come into your heart, meet your need, and from this point on, enable you to be more than a conqueror as you place your trust and confidence in Him. May God bless you.

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THE END