

Christian Living

(Revised)

by
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FOREWORD

It is my pleasure to recommend to the reader the course of study entitled Christian Living. Mrs. Jet Witherspoon Toole shares with us from a rich background of nearly fifty five years in the Pentecostal ministry. She spent twenty of these years dedicated to the teaching of Bible school students as a Bible college instructor. Her commentary regarding Christian living is not meant to be a complete and exhaustive treatise on the subjects enclosed. However, it is presented with the hope in mind that many will gain an insight toward better daily Christian living.

The reader should recognize, and I am sure will be impressed, by the scriptural cross references supplied by the author. This is truly characteristic of her style and reveals the broad general knowledge of the Word of God from which she writes.

Many hundreds have been privileged to sit in her classroom as students and listen to her lectures regarding various Bible doctrinal subjects from the Word of God. Their lives and ministries have been enriched by the exposure she gave to them from the pages of the Holy Bible. There are multitudes of pastors and many missionaries whom she has influenced by her teaching and writing.

Mrs. Toole is now spending the twilight years of her life writing for the Overseas Ministries Training Series of the Foreign Missions Division of the United Pentecostal Church. She has written several other books for the series and her contribution has already become invaluable to the overseas work.

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CHRISTIAN LIVING

INTRODUCTION

God, the Creator of all things, is omnipotent (having all power), omniscient (knowing all things of time and eternity), omnipresent (being everywhere), and eternal (having no beginning or end, but always an eternal now).

Our great God created man with the privilege of reason and choice because He wanted a people who would, under temptation, choose to love and serve Him above all things. He put one prohibition in the (Garden of Eden, the tree of knowledge of good and evil, to test the love and obedience of Adam and Eve. However, being omniscient, God realized before they were created that Adam and Eve would partake of the forbidden fruit. Knowing this, He foreordained the great plan of redemption in Christ for fallen men. Since Adam and Eve were the parents of the human race, the whole human race inherited their fallen nature. Immediately after their disobedience, God was ready with His promise of a Savior (Genesis 3:15). He has placed before all men a choice of good or evil, life or death, and has admonished all to choose good that they might live (Deuteronomy 30:15-20; Isaiah 55:7 9; Jeremiah 6:16; 2:8).

Chapter 1

GOD'S ETERNAL PURPOSE

During the four thousand years of sin and failure, from the time of Adam to the coming of Christ, comparatively few were justified by faith and obedience. However, Enoch walked with God in the midst of a wicked and perverse people (Genesis 5:2-24). Paul recorded that by faith Enoch was translated and did not see death because he had the testimony that he pleased God (Hebrews 11:5, 6).

When the fulness of God's time had come He sent forth His Son, made of a woman (Galatians 4:4, 5), who would redeem men by His own death, burial, resurrection, and ascension. God's provision for the deliverance of men from the power of sin and the penalty of death was His eternal purpose for mankind. He inspired Paul to write to the Ephesian church:

And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, According to the eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord (Ephesians 3:9-11).

This purpose is, more definitely shown in Ephesians 1:4, "According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love." God predestined, or predetermined, that all who would choose to love, serve, and obey Him should be redeemed from the curse of the law, which was the penalty of death for sin (Galatians 3:13-16).

God's eternal purpose for men was to make them holy and without blame by a new birth in Christ, without which no one could enter into the kingdom of God (John 3:1-8). This was the experience of salvation which the first disciples received on the Day of Pentecost. The Holy Ghost is God's gift of righteousness (Romans 5:17), by which men are partakers of Christ's divine nature (II Peter 1:1-4). And this is the source and the power of a Christian life.

Chapter 2

GOD'S REQUIREMENT OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

Solomon wrote, "Lo, this only have I found, that God hath made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions" (Ecclesiastes 7:29). The human race inherited the fallen nature of Adam (Genesis 5:3). In the New Testament this is called the carnal nature (Romans 8:5-7; I Corinthians 3:1-3).

God made known His requirement of righteousness to the people of Israel by His law given at Sinai. The law given to Moses demanded holiness but could not produce it as the law alone could not take sin out of the nature of fallen men. It was weak through the flesh of men (Romans 8:3). The fault was not in the covenant of God but in the people, who were unable to keep the covenant (Hebrews 8:7-11). "For the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did; by the which we draw nigh unto God" (Hebrews 7:19). Paul taught that if there had been a law which could have given life, righteousness should have come by the law (Galatians 3:21). In the new covenant of the New Testament, God writes His law in the hearts of men by the Holy Ghost, giving them the will and the power to obey the law. God's requirement of righteousness has not changed, but He has now given men the power to walk in righteousness. He has fulfilled His eternal purpose to restore His people to a state of holiness by a new birth in Jesus Christ.

Chapter 3

WHAT IS A CHRISTIAN?

One becomes; a Christian by entering into the new birth by faith and obedience to the gospel message. The gospel of our salvation is the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ (I Corinthians 15:1-4). Those on the Day of Pentecost who asked what they should do were told to repent, to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and that they should be filled with the Holy Ghost (Acts 2:38). Paul explained how repentance and baptism is obedience to the gospel message:

Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life (Romans 6:3, 4).

By repentance, we die to the old life of sin, and by baptism, we are buried with Him, that we may be filled with His Spirit to walk in new life in Christ. By this we are made partakers of His divine nature (II Peter 1:4) and of His holiness (Hebrews 12:10). One cannot live a true Christian life until he has been born of the Spirit of God. He can only become a Christian by the transforming power of the Holy Ghost (II Corinthians 5:17; Ephesians 4:17-24). By the new birth, Christians become members of the body of Christ (I Corinthians 12:13). This many membered body of believers, who are joined to the Lord by His Spirit, become His Church (Ephesians 1:22, 23; Colossians 1:17, 18).

The converts of the early apostolic revival were called disciples. The disciples were first called Christians in Antioch during the ministry of Paul and Barnabas (Acts 11:26). They were not only believers and followers of

Christ, but had also taken on His likeness by reason of having been filled with His Spirit (II Corinthians 3:18). A true Christian must follow the Lord where He leads (Romans 8:14). Many professed Christians who have not received the Christian experience continue to walk in their own carnal ways, but a true Christian reflects the Spirit of Christ.

King Agrippa was so impressed with the Christian spirit of Paul as he gave his stirring and anointed testimony that the king responded, “. . . Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian” (Acts 26:28). It is truly a wonderful privilege to be a Christian. Peter testified that it was a glorious privilege to suffer as a Christian (I Peter 4:14-16). In the New Testament, especially in the Epistles, we find the true picture of a Christian. We will study some of these Scriptures which will bring this picture into focus.

Spirit filled Christians are required and empowered to keep the righteousness of the law of Moses as interpreted by Jesus in His sermon on the mount (Matthew 5; 6; 7). The people of Israel interpreted the law as condemning only the acts of sin, but Jesus showed that the guilt of sin begins in the heart and mind before the act is committed. The law of Moses said, “Thou shalt not kill,” but Jesus said, “Whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment” (Matthew 5:21, 22). The law said, “Thou shalt not commit adultery,” but Jesus said, “Whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart” (Matthew 5:27, 28).

Jesus said:

Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you, and persecute you (Matthew 5:43, 44).

The elders of Israel had put their own interpretation on certain parts of the law of Moses. These interpretations were called the tradition of the elders. The scribes and Pharisees asked

Jesus why His disciples transgressed the tradition. He answered, “Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition?” (Matthew 15:1-3). Both the spirit of the law of Moses and the New Testament doctrine of the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus teach that Christians must return good for evil (Romans 12:17-21). Those who are filled with the Spirit of Christ can love with the love God has put in their

hearts. This is the love that brought Christ into the world to die for sinners (John 3:16; Romans 5:5-8) and this is the true spirit of holiness.

The Old Testament prophets foretold of the time when God's righteousness would be imparted to His people. Jeremiah said He would write His laws in men's hearts (Jeremiah 31:31-34). Isaiah prophesied of the highway of holiness over which the Lord's people should walk (Isaiah 35:8-10). Ezekiel made the coming way of holiness even more clear. He said God would cleanse His people from their filthiness and give them a new heart, for He would put His Spirit within them (Ezekiel 36:25-27). These prophecies were fulfilled when Jesus poured out His Spirit on the waiting disciples on the Day of Pentecost.

Chapter 4

CHRISTIAN DEVELOPMENT

When one is first born into the family of God, he is a babe in Christ (Hebrews 5:11-14; 6:1-3). There must follow a time of development and growth which should continue to the end of his life. The Lord has made provision for the continuous growth of His children. He ordained apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers:

For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ (Ephesians 4:12-15).

Paul taught young Christians they must put off the old man (the former self) with his corrupt conversation and deceitful lusts, and must put on the new man which has been created in righteousness and true holiness. He must not grieve the Holy Spirit with his former sins of the flesh. As a new creature in Christ, he must be kind, tenderhearted, and forgiving as God has forgiven him (Ephesians 4:17-22; 5:1-9). Most saints in the Ephesian church had been Gentile heathens who needed to learn the principles of holy living. But with the Holy Ghost within them, the young Christians gladly and easily were transformed into new creatures in Christ.

Chapter 5

CHRISTIAN CHARACTERISTICS

In the Beatitudes (Matthew 5:1-12), Jesus drew a beautiful picture of what Christians should be by pronouncing His blessings. He blessed the poor in spirit as being of the kingdom of heaven. The poor in spirit are not proud, self centered, or self seeking. They humbly feel their dependency on the Lord. Those who mourn, not necessarily for the loss of a loved one, but from a feeling of loneliness and of a need in their lives, would be comforted with a feeling of acceptance by the Lord. There is no more wonderful feeling in the world than the sense that you are accepted of the Lord. God wants His people to be dependent on Him. The meek, the humbly submissive and patient souls, shall inherit the earth (not the material wealth of the world, but the worthwhile things of life, such as love, peace, usefulness, and true happiness). They have wealth of which the rich of this world know nothing. Those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, as opposed to those who are covetous of the beggarly elements of the world, shall surely be filled with His righteousness (Luke 1:53; 15:17-24). The merciful shall be rewarded by a merciful Lord (I Peter 1:3, 4; Hebrews 4:16), while the pure in heart shall see God. This is the greatest reward possible to mankind (I John 3:1-3).

These qualities, which are praised and blessed of the Lord, have to do with the inner self and are only attained by the new birth of God's Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:22, 23). The true peacemakers are the children of God who bear the fruits of righteousness (James 3:16-18). Those who are persecuted for righteousness sake (verse 9-12) will be able to rejoice in the midst of suffering for their hope of a glorious reward awaiting them in heaven. This picture shows us that God is most concerned for Christians' inner spirit and nature, for all the outflow of one's life must flow from the inner spirit.

This is the Lord's picture of a Christian: he is humble, of a lowly spirit, feeling his need of the Lord. He is meekly submissive to the leading of the Lord, not coveting earthly things, but hungering and thirsting after righteousness. He is merciful to those in need. He is pure in heart, able to create an atmosphere of peace even among those who strive because he has the peace of God in his heart he can rejoice in trials and persecutions because he has hope in God. There is no other way of life in this world that can reward one so richly with love, joy, peace, hope, and satisfaction.

Chapter 6

A CHRISTIAN'S PRAYER LIFE

Faith, holy living, and prayer with fasting are basic characteristics of a Christian. Both faith and holy living are fed by prayer. Prayer, which is a Christian's communication between himself and his Lord, is his lifeline. As the body must have food to live, the soul must have prayer to live, for it is through prayer that we are refreshed and renewed in the Holy Ghost.

Jesus Christ, our Lord, prayed because He was man as well as God, and the man was dependent on God within Him (John 5:30-32; Luke 22:39-46). He sometimes, when under a heavy burden, prayed all night. Sometimes He sought a place of solitude where He could pray alone. His pattern of prayer was not only for Himself, but for our benefit. We need to pattern our prayer life after His.

On one occasion, at the close of His prayer, one of His disciples asked Him to teach them to pray. He responded by giving them a very brief, but beautiful and comprehensive, form of prayer which we call "The Lord's Prayer" (Matthew 6:9-13; Luke 11:1-4).

He taught them, by this form, that they should always begin prayer with praise and worship and complete submission to the will of God. After a session of worship, one is in a proper attitude to ask for his personal needs (Philippians 4:6), which should include his spiritual as well as temporal needs. When one begins to ask God for His blessings, he will doubtless remember the things for which he needs to ask forgiveness. To be delivered from evil means to ask God for strength to say no to all temptations.

Jesus continued His lesson on prayer by giving the disciples a parable of a man who went to a neighbor to borrow bread for another friend

(Luke 11:5-13). He taught them, by this parable, the necessity of His importunity in prayer, and also His willingness to answer our prayers when we come to Him in the right spirit. He is not an unwilling neighbor, but is more willing to give to us than we are to receive of His blessings.

Jesus came a second time into the Temple and found men selling doves and sacrifices at exorbitant prices for personal gain. He drove them out and turned over the tables of the money changers. He said, "It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves" (Matthew 21:12, 13). Let us, as true Christians, seek to create, by prayer, a holy atmosphere in our places of worship.

Jesus warned of hypocrisy in prayer. He said we should not be as those who loved to pray standing in the synagogues and in the street corners that we might be seen of men, or as the heathens who thought they would be heard for their much speaking (Matthew 6:5-7). He seemed to suggest that we should pray in secret as much as possible. When we pray in groups, our prayers should be in one accord as much as possible (Acts 1:14; 2:1). An individual's prayer to his Lord should be very worshipful, earnest, and sincere,

Paul's words to the Thessalonians would make a good motto for a Christian's place of prayer:

Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feebleminded, support the weak, be patient toward all men. See that none render evil for evil unto any man; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all men. Rejoice evermore. Pray without ceasing. In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you. Quench not the Spirit. Despise not prophesyings. Prove all things; hold fast that which is good. Abstain from all appearance of evil. And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it (I Thessalonians 5:14-24).

Paul told Timothy, "I will therefore that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting" (I Timothy 2:8). James said the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much. He used Elijah, a just man of life passions (feelings) as our own, as an example of such prayers (James 5:16-18). Peter said, "For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers" (I Peter

3:12). Fasting is often beneficial in connection with prayer, but it seems to have been used more in times of heavy burdens and serious problems (Matthew 17:14-21; Nehemiah 9:1-3; Daniel 6:18-22; Joel 2:12, 13; II Corinthians 6:5).

Chapter 7

CHRISTIAN FRUIT BEARING

Jesus gave a parable of a man who had a fig tree that had borne no fruit in three years (Luke 13:6-9). He asked the vine dresser to cut it down. He said, "Why cumbereth it the ground?" But the vine dresser pleaded with him to give the tree one more chance. He promised to cultivate and fertilize it. If, however, it still had borne no fruit the following year, it should be cut down. Jesus taught by this parable that His people must bear fruit. He furnishes His saints with the spiritual strength and ability to bear the fruit of the Spirit, but they must furnish the will and the effort.

Soon after Jesus had told His disciples that He must go away, but that He would send them another Comforter, which would be Himself in Spirit to abide within them (John 14:16-20, 26), He said to them:

I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit ... He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them in the fire, and they are burned (John 15:1, 2, 5, 6).

God's people must draw life and strength from the vine (Jesus) in order to bear fruit.

We learn of the nature of the fruit of the Spirit from Galatians 5:22-24:

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.

The works of the flesh are listed in Galatians 5:17-21, of which Paul said that they who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. But he also said, “. . . Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh” (Galatians 5:16). The fruit of the Spirit is of the nature of the Lord Jesus Christ, and only those who have been made partakers of His divine nature in the Holy Ghost (II Peter 1:3, 4) can bear the fruit of His Spirit. The Holy Ghost, which is the Spirit of Christ, is the Christian's source of spiritual strength and holiness (Acts 1:8; Ephesians 3:14-21). This is the power that gives Christians victory over the carnal appetites and tendencies of the flesh (Romans 8:14). The people of the Lord are known by the fruit they bear (Matthew 7:15-21; 12:33-35; Philippians 1:9-11; Ephesians 5:9; Hebrews 12:11). We must pray and worship and be led by the Spirit daily to maintain this beautiful life.

Chapter 8

CHRISTIAN INFLUENCE

Matthew 5:13-16 teaches of Christians' influence in the world. Jesus said, "Ye are the salt of the earth" (verse 13). He used the preservative quality of salt to teach of Christians' influence upon the world. The influence of godly, faithful, Spiritfilled Christians stands in opposition to an ungodly and wicked society. Moral and ethical qualities are still to be found in the majority of the nations in the world. Doubtless, that condition is sustained through the influence of godly Christians and their teaching of the Word of God. But as we near the coming of Christ and the end of time, we see the morals of society crumbling and deteriorating. When this deterioration reaches the point where there are more criminals in the world than upright people, the antichrist, the man of sin (II Thessalonians 2:3, 4), will take over the controls of government until the Lord comes and destroys him. This should help us to understand how important the influence of Christians is to the world. They are the Lord's representatives, not only to win the lost to Christ (II Corinthians 5:18-21), but also, by their influence, to hold back the powers of Satan who is trying to destroy mankind.

God's people are the light of the world (verses 14-16). But for true Christians, this world would indeed be a dark place today. Both Old Testament and New Testament saints of God have changed localities and situations worldwide. We remember Daniel and his three Hebrew friends who made such an impact on the empires of Babylon and Medo Persia. The persecutors of Thessalonica said of Paul and Silas, "These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also" (Acts 17:6). Although Paul had many enemies, by his life and ministry, he influenced many thousands of people, including kings, governors, and officials in various positions. As a prisoner on the stormy voyage to Rome, he wielded a mighty influence on all two hundred and seventy five people on board,

beside himself: soldiers, officers, and prisoners. When they were finally shipwrecked on the Island of Melita (Malta today), he won the natives of the island to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 27:9-44; 28:1-10).

Jesus is the light of the world (John 8:12). John said, “in him was life; and the life was the light of men” (John 1:4). Those who follow Him will not walk in darkness but in His light of life (John 8:12). Now that light of life shines forth to the world from His Spirit filled saints. He says to us, “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven” (Matthew 5:16). Paul wrote to Titus, “In all things shewing thyself a pattern of good works: in doctrine shewing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity” (Titus 2:7).

Chapter 9

PRACTICAL CHRISTIANITY

Some seem to have the idea that Christianity involves one's spirit. Christianity involves body, soul, and spirit. Paul minded the Corinthians:

What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's (I Corinthians 6:19, 20).

God is concerned with the way we feel, that way we think, the way we act every day and in every detail of our lives. Paul admonished the Romans:

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God (Romans 12:1, 2).

Jesus sacrificed Himself to save us from death and hell, we can do no less than give ourselves—soul, mind, body as a living sacrifice to serve Him all the days of our

This means we must give our minds, our spirits, and our bodies to obey the Lord and glorify Him. This is our reasonable service, no more than we should do. We owe the Lord everything we and everything we have. This is His good, acceptable, and perfect will for our lives.

How one serves the Lord depends on His will for each individual. God's people, collectively, form the body of Christ, the Church (I Corinthians 12:4-27). And the Lord places the members in the body, the Church, as it pleases Him. So long as each member is obedient to the will and plan of God for his life, there will be perfect unity and harmony in the Church of God. The whole business of the kingdom of God will be accomplished. God is not only concerned with the actual accomplishment of the work to which one is called, but with the attitude, the spiritual commitment, and joyful and willing obedience to His call.

Romans 12:3-21 outline the spiritual attitude with which one should serve the Lord. Paul's very first admonition was not to imagine one's self-importance or to seek for self advancement or glory. We must desire and work for the glory of God, and not our own (verse 3). As each member of a human body has a specific duty to perform for the health and welfare of the body, each member of the body of Christ has a specific place to fill for the accomplishment of the work of the kingdom of God (verses 4-8). God does not base His reward on, the seeming importance of one's position, but on the sincerity, devotion, and zeal with which one fills his place in the body.

Paul called the Corinthians' attention to the household of Stephanas who had addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints (I Corinthians 16:15). Verses 9-16 emphasize the sincerity and love with which Christians should regard one another. The manifestation of love must be sincere, not with hypocrisy. One must hate all evil but not the person who performs the evil. As members of the same family, all Christians should have brotherly love and kind affection for one another. Jesus said, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another" (John 13:35).

Christians should perform the business affairs of the Lord's work, as well as all services, with fervent diligence. They should rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, and continue instant in prayer. They must not neglect prayer, but pray every day and live in touch with the Lord. The love of God in the hearts of His saints will be manifested in the way they treat and care for one another: distributing to those in need and given to hospitality.

We worship God, but we can only serve Him by serving one another (Matthew 25:34-45). Christians, in the love of God, can bless and pray for those who persecute them, rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep. A Christian should never consider himself above others

in God's kingdom. God looks on all alike. He is absolutely impartial in His love and care of His people, and we must be impartial in our consideration of others (James 2:1-5).

Verses 17-21 teach of the spirit in which we should deal with unbelievers. We must never return evil for evil. That would put us on the same spiritual level as the unbeliever. We must deal honestly with all men, not only because it is God's command, but also for a testimony of honesty to unbelievers (Acts 6:3). God's people should never attempt to avenge their wrongs. The Lord has promised to do that. God's law is to always return good for evil (Matthew 5:43-48). By doing so we will overcome evil with good.

As you study the Scriptures concerning Christian living, you will find many passages dealing with practical Christianity. Here are a few other references for your study: I Corinthians 3:9; Galatians 6:2, 10; I Timothy 6:17-19; and I Peter 2:12. "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord" (I Corinthians 15:58).

Chapter 10

THE CHRISTIAN LIFE IS A BATTLE

Paul, in the closing remarks of his letter to the Ephesians, said, “Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil” (Ephesians 6:10, 11). The Christian’s battle is a spiritual one, waged against the wiles (cunning strategy) of the devil, whose whole business is to trap and destroy souls in sin and death. But he cannot penetrate the armor of God. Therefore, we must put on God’s whole armor.

When we have done this, we can stand in the assurance of faith. The Lord will give His Holy Ghost filled saints abundant power to overcome all the wiles and temptations of the devil (Acts 1:8). The Holy Ghost not only gives us spiritual strength to say no to every suggestion and temptation of the enemy, but it is a wall of protection around us. Jesus said that in the day we received the Holy Ghost, we would know that He is in the Father, and we in Him, and He in us (John 14:20). This is the whole armor by which the Lord will protect His people (Ephesians 6:10-18).

The first piece of armor mentioned in this passage of Scripture is the girdle of truth. In ancient warfare, to be girded was to be prepared for action. The first thing in a Christian’s warfare is to be girded with the truth of God’s Word. David knew what it meant to be girded for battle. He said, “For thou hast girded me with strength unto the battle: thou hast subdued under me those that rose up against me” (Psalm 18:39).

The weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty through God to pull down the strongholds of Satan (II Corinthians 10:4, 5). The Word of God, when preached in all its truth and purity in the power of the Holy Ghost, will surely pull down the devil’s strongholds of false doctrine,

myths, deceptions, and philosophies. The Christian's one weapon is the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. It is quick (alive) and powerful, and sharper than any two edged sword. It will pierce the conscience of men as it discerns the thoughts and intents of the heart (Hebrews 4:12, 13). It can readily cast down evil imaginations, pride, and every evil thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God. It will then bring unbelievers into the captivity and obedience to Christ (II Corinthians 10:5).

The breastplate of righteousness is the Christian's spiritual protection against evil. The breastplate was that part of the ancient soldier's armor that protected his heart. God's soldiers of the cross must have their hearts (their spiritual life) protected by God's gift of righteousness. The devil cannot penetrate a Christian's armor of love and devotion to his God (Romans 8:35-39).

Having one's feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace belongs to the thought, in Ephesians 6:14, of having the loins girded for battle. A soldier of the cross uses the sword of the Spirit to win the battle for souls. And it is written of those who take the gospel message to the world, "How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!" (Romans 10:15).

The Christian's preparation to preach the gospel of Christ has to do with his own spirit and life as well as with his preaching. Paul instructed Timothy to "take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee" (I Timothy 4:16). Paul not only instructed others to concern themselves first with their own holiness, but he practiced this also. He said he kept his body under subjection lest after he had preached to others he might be a castaway (I Corinthians 9:27). The breastplate of righteousness protects one's own holiness.

Above all, a Christian must take the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked" (Ephesians 6:16). There can be no victory in any phase of a Christian's life apart from faith. This is the victory that overcomes the world (I John 5:4). Faith in God brings the cloud of His presence between His saints and their enemies (Exodus 14:19, 20). And faith was the shield that protected David and gave him victory over the giant (I Samuel 17:32-50).

I once read the testimony of a woman who had received a visitation from the Lord in the midst of a severe trial. She said as she prayed she had a vision of a huge soldier dressed in all his armor, but having only a

very small shield which could not protect him from the darts and spears flung against him. Then she saw a little soldier with a huge shield which completely covered him from the darts of his enemies. She then prayed for the Lord, to make her a little soldier with a great shield of faith. Without faith it is impossible to please God (Hebrews 11:6). It is by faith that we have access into the grace and glory of God (Romans 5:2). The faith that brings the victory does not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God (I Corinthians 2:5).

One cannot wield the sword of the Spirit without the helmet of salvation (Ephesians 6:17). The helmet of the ancient soldier was for the protection of his head, just as the helmet of salvation is for the Christian's mind. The Holy Ghost transforms, or renews, the Christian's mind (Romans 12:2) so he no longer thinks as he did before being born again. And when the mind is changed, the whole person is changed. When one is made a new creature in Christ, the things of the natural life become more or less unimportant except as they are related to his life for Christ (II Corinthians 5:17, 18). So long as he is led by the Spirit of God, the Holy Ghost will protect his mind from false and carnal things. With this protection, he is in a position to use the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God, in his battle for right against wrong, and to win others to Christ. Christians, having on the whole armor of God, are enabled to fight the good fight of faith (II Timothy 4:6-8) by the use of prayer and the Word of God (Ephesians 6:18). But they must pray every day and live constantly in the presence of the Lord.

Chapter 11

THE CHRISTIAN LIFE IS A RACE

Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God (Hebrews 12:1, 2).

The cloud of witnesses that Paul used to encourage the Hebrew saints to faithfulness was the many Old Testament saints whose accomplishments by faith are recorded in Hebrews 11:1-40. If these Old Testament saints manifested such faith in God and faithfulness, how much more should we who are under the new covenant of a Spirit filled life, faithfully run the race and receive the prize of eternal life. Paul is one of the examples of New Testament saints who finished his race with honors (II Timothy 4:6-8). He used the natural race of sportsmen to teach of the Christian race. He spoke of the sacrifices and the training they applied to themselves that they might win the prize of a corruptible crown, and yet only one could win (I Corinthians 9:24-27). Paul ran the race of faith with assurance that he would win the incorruptible crown. How much more should Christians deny themselves and take up their cross to follow the Lord through this life to win the crown of eternal life (Matthew 16:24-27).

Christians, who love God with all their heart and value their hope of heaven, have given up all sin. But sometimes they may permit things in their lives, which are not necessarily sins but which may be weights, to greatly hinder their spiritual progress. They may become too involved in business or some temporal interest which will detract from rather than enhance their spirituality. Jesus warned of this by His parable of the seed

that fell among thorns and was choked. He said the thorns represented the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches which will choke the Word of God in a Christian's life and cause him to become unfruitful (Matthew 13:7, 22).

The reward of eternal life is promised only to those who are faithful to the end of this life, "Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward. For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise" (Hebrews 10:35, 36). The Lord charged the Ephesians with having lost their first love. He admonished them to repent (Revelation 2:4, 5). And He then promised, "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life" (Revelation 2:10). Jesus is the author and the finisher of our faith, and if we will deny the flesh and look to Him for spiritual strength and direction, He will receive us into His glory at the end of our race. The Apostle Paul, who had such a victorious race, once said, "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (Philippians 1:21). There can be no defeat in such a commitment to our Lord. The Psalmist said, "Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory" (Psalm 73:24).

Chapter 12

TRUE CHRISTIAN LIVING

The love of God is the most important thing in a Christian's life (Romans 13:8-10). It is the source and power of a Christian's holiness. God is love, and when one is filled with His Spirit, he will also be filled with His love (I John 4:8, 16). Charity, which is divine love, is the basis for every Christian grace. It is the source of perfection (Colossians 3:14; I Timothy 1:5).

The thirteenth chapter of I Corinthians is well placed, between chapter 12, which teaches of the ministries and working force of the Church, and chapter 14, which gives the rules for regulating the Church. Chapter 13 teaches of the Spirit in which all the gifts and ministries of the Church must operate.

Verses 1-3 emphasize that any manifestation of a gift or ministry which is not motivated by the love of God and operated in His Spirit is useless and often harmful. A Christian's life and ministry must be the outgrowth of God's Spirit within him (Galatians 5:22, 23). Any manifestation which is activated by a proud or self centered, carnal spirit will have the effect of sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal. God's gifts are not given for human display but for spiritual profit (I Corinthians 12:7). Even a discourse on prophecy should be spiritually motivated and anointed. The faith which God gives is that which works by love (Galatians 5:6). Many people who are deceived think they can obtain the favor of God by making human sacrifices, but human works and sacrifices profit nothing.

Verses 4-7 name Christian graces and attitudes of humility which characterize the love of God within His people. Longsuffering and kindness are fruits of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22, 23). Christians who are filled with God's love will not envy another's blessings or flaunt their self-importance. They will not behave in an unbecoming or indecent manner. The love of God will cause them to be concerned with the welfare of others. Christians should not be easily provoked or offended. They should not imagine evil against others, but should find joy only in that which is true. A Christian will patiently bear whatever circumstance comes his way, remembering that all things work for good to those who love God (Romans 8:28). He will endure the trials with hopeful anticipation.

In verses 8-10 Christians are reminded that the ministerial gifts of prophecy, tongues, and knowledge serve only for this mortal life, but that charity, the love of God, is eternal. We must leave behind the things which pertain to this life, but our spiritual experience in the love of God will go with us into eternity.

Verses 11-13 speak of the time when Christian growth shall have reached its maturity. We will leave behind the limitations of the finite life when we attain to immortality, even as a child grows out of childhood into adulthood. Now we see eternity only as through a glass darkly, as looking into a clouded mirror, but in immortality we shall see the Lord face to face. Now we know only in part, as it is revealed to us, but then we shall know as we are known of Him. There will be no need for faith and hope after we have reached heaven, but charity is both for this life and for eternity.

When Saul of Tarsus met Jesus on the Damascus road and learned that He was the Lord, he surrendered his life completely to the Lord. From then on he considered all those things he once thought were gain as loss and refused that he might win Christ and live in His righteousness (Philippians 3:7-9). After this meeting his one ambition was to know the Lord in an ever increasing revelation. He wanted to know and feel, in a greater sense, the power of His resurrection and also the fellowship of His sufferings. His only thought for himself was to be ready for the resurrection, but he was pressing toward that mark for the grand prize of eternal life (Philippians 3:10-14). Every Christian should have the same vision of life and the same goal as Paul expressed in this passage of Scripture. This is especially true in these days of worldwide unrest and turmoil when we know not what a day may bring forth (Proverbs 27:1; Matthew 25:1-13; Luke 21:34-36). Let us draw near to the Lord. There

is nothing in this life that we can afford to let hinder us in our walk with Him.

Chapter 13

CHRISTIAN RESPONSIBILITIES

A Christian's responsibility toward marriage: A Christian should never enter into any relationship or position without much prayer and a complete commitment of his life to the will of God. First of all, in looking forward to marriage, he or she should consider only a Christian companion. One cannot expect to find fellowship, harmony, or happiness with an unsaved companion (II Corinthians 6:14-16; I Corinthians 7:39). However, if one is already married before becoming a Christian, he or she should remain with the wife or husband and seek to win the unsaved companion to the Lord (I Corinthians 7:12-16). Young people who make the will of the Lord their first priority will be led of His Spirit into that which is right and good, and in which they will find happiness and blessing. Christian young people must absolutely refuse the loose morals of today's permissive society which the Lord condemns.

A husband's responsibility to his wife: A husband should love his wife, care for her, and protect her as the weaker vessel (I Peter 3:7; Ephesians 5:25-33; Colossians 3:19; I Corinthians 7:3). God ordained the wife to be a helpmeet to the husband (Genesis 2:20-24), and they should live and work as a team, with the husband as the leader. As they live by God's rule and plan, their lives can compliment each other. In most cases, a single life is incomplete.

A wife's responsibility to her husband: The Lord ordained the husband to be the head of the family, and that the wife should submit to his leadership. However, as a team, they should counsel with one, another concerning family affairs and important decisions. The wife is commanded to honor and reverence her husband (Ephesians 5:22-24; I Corinthians 7:3, 13-16; I Peter 3:1-6). It is the husband's place to provide

for the wife and family and the wife's place to make the home as comfortable and attractive as possible. When a husband and wife love the Lord and love one another, their lives and service can be harmonious and beautiful.

Parents' responsibility to their children: Parents are not only responsible to provide for their children's temporal needs, but also for their spiritual needs. All children need discipline. However, fathers and mothers should not provoke their children to wrath, but should bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord (Ephesians 6:4). Children should be taught to obey and honor their parents, for this was the first commandment with promise (Ephesians 6:1-3; Exodus 20:12). It is very important to teach children the Word of the Lord from an early age. God commanded Moses who commanded the people of Israel:

And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shall talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up (Deuteronomy 6:6, 7).

Christian parents should teach their children the Word of, God with the same diligence and zeal with which Moses taught. God's Word does not wear out, and the Scriptures are very relevant for today. If more modern parents taught their children in this way, perhaps we would not have the youth problems and the permissive society that we are troubled with today. Children's Christian education should start in the home. The love of godly parents, the family altar, and the Christian influence and atmosphere in the home can make a world of difference in the type of young people who go out from the home to make their place in the world.

A Christian's responsibility to the Church: Let us start with the words of Jesus, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another" (John 13:35). God's Spirit filled people are all members of the body of Christ, which is the Church (Colossians 1:18, 24), and therefore all belong to the same family (I Corinthians 12:12-27). We should love one another with the love of God in the Holy Ghost. We should be sympathetic and helpful to one another in times of trouble or sorrow, and should rejoice with one another in times of blessings and honors. Paul exhorted, "And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you" (Ephesians 4:32). And, "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith"

(Galatians 6:10). Likewise, Jesus gave instruction concerning dealing with trespasses and offences occurring between the saints of God (Luke 17:3, 4).

In Romans 12:3-13 Paul taught of the Christians' responsibilities to their church services. They should work together in love and harmony, each one filling his own place in his local congregation. One should not be slothful, but zealous for the service of the Lord, faithful in prayer, and given to hospitality. Of course, saints should honor and obey their pastor so long as he proves himself to be a man of God (Hebrews 13:7, 17; 10:25).

Christians are made stewards, both of the gospel and of the manifold grace of God.

As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen (I Peter 4:10, 11).

The giving of funds for the support of the gospel is classed as one of the ministries of the Church (Romans 12:8). It should be done simply and cheerfully in love, as well as bountifully (II Corinthians 9:6, 7). We should ever remember that all we have and all we give has been given to us of God (I Timothy 6:17-19; I Chronicles 29:14).

Christians responsibility concerning their appearance: Salvation begins in the heart. But when the heart is cleansed and changed, it also changes the outward appearance. God made it clear under the Old Testament law of Moses that the matter of dress was important. He said, "The woman shall not wear that which pertaineth unto a man, neither shall a man put on a woman's garment: for all that do so are abomination unto the LORD thy God" (Deuteronomy 22:5).

God condemned the women of Israel for their haughtiness and pride, in which they decked themselves in fine clothing, jewels, ornaments, and cosmetics. He said they should be brought to lament and mourn in desolation (Isaiah 3:16-26). The New Testament teaches that Spirit filled Christian women should adorn themselves in modest apparel, manifesting a decorous and demure sobriety (I Timothy 2:9, 10). Peter said of

Christian women:

Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price (1 Peter 3:3, 4).

It isn't wrong to dress in the manner of one's time so long as it is modest and will reflect a Christian spirit. A godly woman's dress or hair style should not be masculine, nor should a man's dress and hair style be feminine. God judges from the heart, but men can only judge from the outward appearance. A Christian's appearance should reflect a Christian character.

Christians' responsibility to the government under which they live: God has ordained law and government for the benefit of all people. Christians should be good citizens of the country in which they live. They must be obedient to its laws (Romans 13:1-7), not from fear of its penalties, but for conscience sake: that they may please God and do that which are right in all circumstances. Christians should also pay the required taxes of their government. Jesus said, "Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and unto God, the things that are God's" (Mark 12:17). Christians, as well as other citizens, benefit from the protection of laws and the public services furnished by the government. They should do their part toward the support of these benefits.

Paul exhorted Timothy to make prayers, supplications, intercessions, and giving of thanks for all men, for it is God's will that all men should be saved. He also asked him to pray for kings and those in positions of authority, that His people might live a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty (1 Timothy 2:1-4). There is only one circumstance under which Christians could be justified in disobeying the law of the land. That would be a law which would contradict the law of God, as in the case of the apostles when they declared they must obey God rather than man (Acts 4:18-20; 5:27-29). It is still God's will that we pray for our presidents, governors, lawmakers, and all officials. It is the prayers and the power of the Holy Ghost in God's saints today that is holding back the holocaust that could erupt in this wicked age.

Chapter 14

A CHRISTIAN'S ASSURANCE OF HOPE

The three most important things for the peace, happiness, and well being of a Christian is doubtless faith, hope, and charity, which is divine love (I Corinthians 13:13). Charity, of course, is the greatest. But hope is that trust in God which will bring one safely through all the difficulties, trials, and sorrows of his life. Paul said we are saved by hope (Romans 8:24). But he also said if we have hope only for this life we are of all men most miserable (I Corinthians 15:19). The value of hope in God is that it reaches within the veil and takes hold of the eternal life of God (Hebrews 6:19). Again Paul said, "For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens" (II Corinthians 5:1). We know this because God has given us an earnest of our inheritance (Ephesians 1:13, 14). Beside this, God has given us an absolute assurance that His promise cannot fail.

The writer of Hebrews, whom we believe to be the Apostle Paul, has reminded us of God's promise made to Abraham (Hebrews 6:13-20), God promised Abraham that he should have a Seed (descendant) in whom all families of the earth should be blessed (Genesis 12:1-3). That one Seed was Christ (Galatians 3:16). It was important that He should come through the lineage of Isaac and Jacob, who together with Abraham, were the patriarchs of the nation of Israel. Isaac, the son of promise, was born when Abraham was about one hundred years old. Later God told him to offer Isaac as a sacrifice on Mount Moriah. Abraham faithfully carried out God's command to the point of lifting his hand to take the life of his son Isaac when God held his hand and showed him a ram caught in the thicket to take Isaac's place as the sacrifice. On this occasion God repeated his promise to Abraham and confirmed it by an oath (Genesis 22:1-18). Nearly two thousand years later, God inspired Paul to write:

Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath: That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us: Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec (Hebrews 6:17-20).

By those two immutable things, God's promise and God's oath, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we know that Jesus Christ, the Seed of Abraham, who came and paid the price for our salvation, will receive us in heaven at the end of this life. This is our strong consolation and our hope of eternal life.

This blessed hope (Titus 2:13) was also confirmed to the Apostle Peter. He said:

For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount. We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts (II Peter 1:16-19).

Surely Christians have every incentive to live a holy life, to fight the good fight of faith, and to run this race with patience and faithfulness to the end which will open into glory.