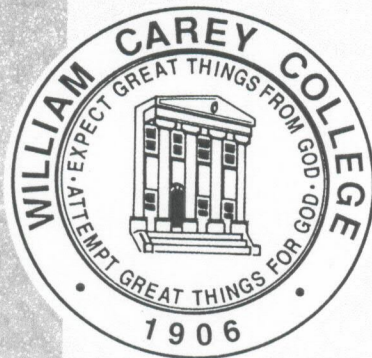


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*In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus...
I give you this charge: Preach the word
(2 Timothy 4:1-2a).*



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For, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?

And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!"

Romans 10: 13-15

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BEING A CHRISTIAN FATHER IN A PAGAN SOCIETY

Genesis 6:5 - 7:1

Introduction:

A recent survey of people that attended Sunday School when they were children revealed that when both parents attended Sunday School, 72% of the children attended Sunday School regularly when they were adults. When just the father attended without the mother, 55% of those children attended Sunday School as adults. When just the mother attended, only 15% of those children attended Sunday School as adults. When neither parent attended, only 6% attended as adults. A key figure in the spiritual heritage of a child is his or her father.

I. The World is Wicked (6:5-6).

Noah's world sounds like ours. Every time I read the paper, I want to give up. Surely the sin of our society pains the heart of God.

II. Noah Proves It Was Possible to be a Christian Man in a Pagan Society (6:8-9, 22; 7:5).

A. He found favor in the eyes of the Lord (6:8).

He pleased God not man.
I Thessalonians 2:4 says, "On the contrary, we speak as men approved by God to be entrusted with the Gospel. We are not trying to please men but God, who tests the heart." (NIV) Are we too concerned about what the world thinks of us? If I do that, or if I take a stand against sin, then they will think I am a fanatic. In this age of tolerance, we may be unwilling to stand for anything. We covet society's approval at the cost of losing God's approval. We must remember whom we need to please.

B. He was a righteous man (6:9).

He did what was right. Our righteousness is the most vital part of our Christian witness (2 Peter 2:19). *The world will not listen to our talk unless they see righteousness in our walk.*

C. Blameless among the people (6:9).

Noah set an example for the world. He didn't permit the world to taint him. We need men of courage today who will be a light unto the world by the way they live—men who will lead by their character and integrity, not simply with their words. We need men who will be respected by the world because they demonstrate the character and the love of Christ.

D. He walked with God (6:9).

The word "walk" in the Old and New Testaments refers to lifestyle. Noah followed God and lived under His guidance each day. His lifestyle reflected the ongoing relationship that he had with God. When people look at how you live, is it obvious to them that you spend time with Christ each day?

E. He Obeyed God (6:22, 7:5).

The problem we have is not our understanding of the Word of God. The problem we have is not obeying the commands that we do confess to understand. Mark Twain said, "It's not what I don't know about the Bible that bothers me, but what I do know." If we are going to be Christian men, we must listen to and obey the Word of God.

III. Noah Led His Family to Salvation (7:1).

I have come to realize that I can be successful in the world's eye and be a failure. Even if I was a pastor of a large church and baptized hundreds of people, if I don't teach my children about God, then I have failed. If I am going to reach them, then I must live a life like Noah.

Conclusion:

God has given me a great gift and a responsibility in my two children. The greatest gift I can give them is a Christian dad.

THE DIMENSIONS OF GOD'S LOVE

Ephesians 3:18; John 3:16

Introduction:

Has anyone ever asked you, "How much do you love me?" Billy Ready wrote a song entitled, "That Was Enough for Me."

*When I was a little girl on my daddy's knee
I looked up and asked him how much he loved me,
He stretched out his hands as wide as can be
And that was enough for me, that was enough for
me.*

It was all that I needed to see.

*He stretched out his hands as wide as can be
And that was enough for me.*

I. How Wide is God's Love? "For God so Loved the World"

- A. How wide is God's love? It includes the whole world.
- B. William Barclay wrote, "Jesus stretched out his arms on the cross and embraced the whole universe, every man of every color and every creed and of every generation that has ever lived. God loves them." That's how wide God's love is.

II. How Long is God's Love? "That He Gave His Only Son"

- A. What is the true test of love? It is not simply our words, but also our actions. Jesus said, "and this is love that a man lay down his life for his friends." While we were yet sinners, God sent His Son to die for us.
- B. No matter what circumstances we are in or how difficult times may be, we need never to question if God loves us.

*Well, I asked my heavenly father above,
How deep, how wide, how high was His love
for me.*

*He stretched out His hands at Mt. Calvary
And that was enough for me, that was
enough for me.*

It was all that I needed to see.

*He stretched out His hands at Mt. Calvary
And that was enough for me, that was
enough for me.*

*He stretched out His hands at Mt. Calvary
And that was enough, that was enough,
that was enough for me.*

III. How Deep is God's Love? "Should Not Perish"

- A. We face perishing every day. It is the consequences of our sin.
- B. Imagine if a homeless family moved into a house you owned. They couldn't pay rent, so you paid utilities and bought them groceries. They were foul mouthed and full of ingratitude. You tried to be their neighbor. You even sent your son down to play with their children. You thought, "he will win them over." They received him cordially. After a few days they took him out back and tortured and killed him. How would you respond?
- C. How did God respond to us when others did that and more to Him?

IV. How High is God's Love? "Eternal Life"

- A. Instead of perishing, God's love gives us the promise of heaven.
- B. Harry Moorhouse preached for D. L. Moody from the text John 3:16. On the last night of the crusade he said, "I have been trying to tell you how much God loves you, and this poor stammering tongue of mine will not let me. If I were to climb Jacob's ladder, go through the gates of Heaven, go to the very office of Gabriel, the archangel of all Heaven who knows God better than anyone, and I were to say to him, 'Can you help me understand how much God loves me?' All he could say is, 'For God so loved...'"

Conclusion:

Ask God to show you how much He loves you.

HOW TO HAVE A REVIVAL

Isaiah 6:1-8

Introduction:

Throughout the land Christians seek revival. From the pew to the pulpit, from Capitol Hill to Duck Hill (MS) people want revival. Isaiah served the Lord during the reign of Uzziah (1:1), but after Uzziah's death, Isaiah had an encounter with God that changed his life and ministry. Isaiah went on to depict the Messiah more clearly than any other prophet. Looking at Isaiah's encounter, we discover three aspects that prepare us for revival.

- I. **Recognize Who God Is, and Who We Are in His Presence (6:1-8).**
 - A. When Isaiah took his eyes off the earthly king he was able to see the heavenly King. We also need to realize our hope is in God, not Washington. "High and exalted," robe filling the temple, earthquake, and smoke are all signs of God's presence.
 - B. Isaiah cried out because of his unclean lips. This is not because Isaiah was eating spaghetti, was caught up to heaven before he could wipe his mouth, and was embarrassed. The mouth represents the inner person, who we really are (James 3:3-12; Matt. 15:8-20).
 - C. God is the creator and ruler of the cosmos. He pointed at the darkness and said, "Light!" and the darkness obeyed. He pointed at the earth and said, "Dry land! Water!" and it came into existence. He commanded the air to be filled with birds and the dry land with animals. On the Day of Judgment all creation will stand before the Lord and show that it has been exactly what God created it to be, except man.
- II. **Allow God to Perform His Purifying Work in Our Lives (6:2-7).**
 - A. Seraphs were beings of fire. Yet the coal of fire from God's personal altar was so hot this fire being had to use tongs. God's purifying work is depicted as fire.

Touching the mouth represents purifying the life.

- B. Roy Rogers would always rescue a person in distress, discover the person who had been shot, take him toward town, make camp at night, and discover the person was going to die if the bullet was not removed immediately. Roy would perform surgery. He would use the same knife he used to clean his fingernails, clean Trigger's hooves, and skin the rabbit they ate for supper. But he would always place the blade in the campfire before cutting. Why? To burn off all impurities.

III. **Volunteer to Become a Spokesperson for God (6:8).**

- A. This step is often left out. The setting is that God is on His throne, ready to pronounce judgment. The Seraphs are flying above the throne.
- B. Isaiah, in the background, perhaps afraid God has forgotten him now that he is quiet, waved his arms to get God's attention. He yelled out, "Here am I! Send me."

Conclusion:

The way to revival is to recognize who God is and that we are sinners in his eyes. God wants to save us. If we will allow him, he will transform our lives through his Son, Jesus Christ. For revival to have its full affect, we must voluntarily share the Gospel message. Living a good life is a good start, but others will never truly know why we live the way we do unless we tell them. Revival will then come not only to us, but also to our homes, work, and communities.

**THE SPIRIT—OUR CONSTANT
CHRISTIAN AID**

Revelation 1:10 - 3:22; 22:17

Introduction:

Predictions concerning the new millennium often make the church unsure of the future. The Christians near the end of the first century must have felt unsure also, as if Christ had left them as orphans. In John 14:18, Jesus told his disciples that he would not leave them as orphans. Four times Jesus said he would send the Spirit, the Comforter/Counselor (John 14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7). A comforter (paraclete) was someone "called along side" to aid an individual. A paraclete could act like a counsel, and advise, comfort, encourage, and empower individuals in need.

At first the church must have felt the aid of the Spirit. Christianity spread like wildfire throughout the Mediterranean world. Then, the tide turned. Local civil and social persecution began. Roman emperors like Nero and Domitian persecuted Christians. The Church must have wondered what happened to the Spirit, the Comforter. John, writing from exile, encouraged the churches showing them the Spirit was still working in the world, aiding the Church. This strengthens us during uncertain times.

I. The Spirit Helps the Church See Things God's Way (1:10)

- A. In the midst of helpless circumstances, John found great hope for the future. He was in the Spirit. The Spirit helped John see the work God was doing. The Spirit also helps us see hope for the future.
- B. William Booth, while walking through the streets of London, saw the scum of society, the down and out forgotten ones. The Spirit moved him, "Where can you go find such heathen as these, and where is there so great a need for your labors?" The Church of the Salvation Army is now in 91 countries with about three million members.

II. The Spirit Moves the Church (2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22).

- A. The Spirit is the dynamo of the church. In Ephesus He warmed up a cold relationship. In Smyrna He gave courage to the fearful. In Pergamum He rooted out corruption. In Thyatira He bestowed zeal to the compromisers. In Sardis He energized the slothful. In Philadelphia He exalted the downtrodden. In Laodicia He rebuked the proud and boastful. The Church is God's instrument to accomplish His will in the world today.
- B. Christians become powerless and unfulfilled for at least two reasons. First, they are not in the Church. We have lone-ranger Christians. The Church is Christ's body. Second, they are in the Church, but not in the Spirit. Being in the doors and going through the motions is not the same as being in the Spirit. We must be in the Church, in the Spirit to be moved by the Spirit.

III. The Spirit is Our Co-laborer in the World (22:17).

- A. We do not labor alone. The Spirit not only helps us see God's work and empowers us to do God's work, the Spirit works with us.
- B. For a soldier in the Roman army, a paraclete was his fighting partner. They would fight back to back and cover each other's blind side. The Spirit is our paraclete in the war that rages between the Kingdom of God and the kingdom of this world.

Conclusion:

Though dark days come, the Spirit does not abandon the Church. If we will but get in the Spirit and allow the Spirit to get in us, He will show us God's work, empower us, and work at our side.

A QUESTION OF AWARENESS, PREPARATION, AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Luke 12:35-40

Introduction:

Meeting a deadline is something we all understand. In order to meet our deadlines in life, there are three things we must assess. We must know when the tasks or projects must be completed, the resources that are available to do them, and our responsibility in accomplishing them.

Life's deadlines also include a deadline for Christians—when the Kingdom of God will come in its fullness. Jesus demonstrated this understanding in a parable to the people. In this parable, Jesus spoke of what he expected to find when the deadline arrives.

I. A People Who Were Aware That the Deadline Was Coming (12:35-36).

- A. Jesus told the people a story of servants awaiting their master's return from a wedding banquet. There was a sense of anticipation, knowing his arrival would be soon. Jesus used this parable to encourage the people to be ready.
- B. As servants of Christ we need to be ready for His return. Examples of our preparedness include making disciples, baptizing, and teaching. We should provide evidence of personal belief by a holy eagerness for the things of God.

II. A People Who Were Prepared for the Deadline (12:37-38).

- A. Jesus used two phrases to describe the prepared state of the servants. To "gird one's loins" meant to prepare for activity. The "lamps burning" was to furnish light for the master's return. Since they did not know the time of his return, they had to remain in a state of preparation.

- B. The servants had specific tasks that were assigned to them. The pleasure of the master would depend upon whether or not they had fulfilled their assigned tasks. They had to be in a constant state of service.
- C. As servants of Christ we need to be practicing the things that Jesus taught others to do. We should be demonstrating love in our actions, humility towards others, self-discipline in our lives, self-denial, and sharing with others the lessons Jesus taught.

III. A People Who Are Accountable for Their Activity While Awaiting the Deadline (12:39-40).

- A. The servants had a choice to make. They could be obedient to their master in his absence or they could take this time and simply neglect their responsibilities. The former decision would bring both joy and reward from the master. The latter would result in negative consequences.
- B. As servants of Christ we also have a choice to make. Our choice will make a difference in our life and in the lives of those around us. With opportunity comes responsibility, with blessing comes expectation, and with knowledge comes a responsibility to teach.

Conclusion:

The writer of Hebrews said it best, "How can we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?" (2:3) Are you aware, are you prepared, are you being accountable today?

THE GODLY MAN

Ephesians 5:21-6:4

Introduction:

This passage has often been misunderstood and misinterpreted. Some have incorrectly interpreted the passage to be addressing the rights of a godly man; rather, the passage is presenting responsibilities of a godly man. The responsibilities extend beyond the marital relationship and into our relationships with our family, friends, and acquaintances.

I. The Godly Man Is as Submissive to His Household as He Desires it to be to Him.

- A. The term Paul uses for submission is a military term meaning to close ranks against an enemy or intruder. Thus the word picture is that of a husband and wife linking arms in defense of the family as Christ and the church link arms in defense of the gospel.
- B. Being submissive involves respecting other people. In order to do this we must be respectable.
- C. Being submissive involves restraining against ungodly ways. In order to do this, we must be willing to exercise restraint.
- D. Being submissive involves serving. In order to do this, we must be willing to be a servant.
- E. Remember that the world's greatest leader washed the feet of his associates.

II. The Godly Man Practices Self-Giving Sacrificial Love Toward Others, Especially His Wife.

- A. Paul instructed husbands to love their wives as Christ loved the church.
- B. The kind of love Christ had for the church was patient, forgiving, and never ending.
- C. How much stronger would our relationships and churches be if we could learn to practice Christ's love?

III. The Godly Man Is Exclusively Devoted to His Marital Relationship.

- A. Paul describes the godly man's love as one that should "nourish" and "cherish" (5:29). The two terms denote solitude and tender regard (1 Thessalonians 2:7).
- B. When used of a husband's care for his wife, they imply protection and affection.
- C. This is true when marriages rise to the standards set by Christ's care for the church.

IV. The Godly Man Demonstrates a Knowledge of God by His Actions Toward Others—Especially Towards His Family.

- A. In 6:1-4 Paul identifies the duties of a godly man that are displayed both positively and negatively. Sometimes learning what not to do is as important as learning what to do.
- B. Paul warns against the practice of irritating the child. This could be by nagging at them and so leading them to hostility.
- C. Paul also encourages the godly man to rear his children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.
- D. The greatest means of teaching our children is by the lives we live. We should practice "do as I do." We should never practice "do as I say do."
- E. The way we live our lives also has an impact on others. It demonstrates how we apply the lessons of God in our lives.

Conclusion:

The godly man should be for his circle of influence what Christ was and is for the church.

OBEDIENCE TO THE LORD

Genesis 22

Introduction:

When people think of Abraham, they think most often of his faith. Indeed, faith is probably the most outstanding characteristic of his life. Hebrews 11, the "Faith Chapter," notes his record of faith. But Abraham was also a man of obedience. James mentions the "works" of Abraham. Genesis 22 is a record of Abraham's faith, but his faith caused him to obey. In fact, if faith does not lead to obedience, it is not faith at all.

I. God's Demand.

- A. Unambiguous demand (vs. 2)—The command was clear and precise. Abraham has no doubt in what God asked him to do. The Hebrew sentence construction emphasizes the subject of the sentence, showing no doubt that the testing came from God himself. Abraham heard correctly, and that is what broke his heart.
- B. Unexpected demand—Isaac was the promised son, through whom God's promise to Abraham would be fulfilled (Genesis 21:12). Yet God commanded Abraham to kill Isaac. The command made no sense, but Abraham's faith caused him to obey.
- C. Unexplained demand—Abraham was not told why God commanded such a thing. The Bible records no conversations or arguments between God and Abraham. God is silent, and Abraham is left to wonder about the reason behind the command. He does not understand, but he follows God nonetheless.

II. Abraham's Response.

- A. Immediate obedience—Abraham "rose early in the morning" (vs. 3). Apparently the command from God came in a dream or vision during the night. The immediate obedience of Abraham reveals the certainty with which Abraham understood the

command. He wasted no time in setting out on the journey.

- B. Enduring obedience—Abraham walked for three days in obedience (vs. 4). The journey must have been a burden for Abraham, knowing that Isaac was soon to die. Abraham had ample opportunity to turn back from the journey, but for three long days and three sleepless nights, he obeyed.
- C. Absolute Obedience—Abraham reached forth his hand to slay his son (vs. 10). The journey was complete and Abraham had been faithful throughout. The question now was whether Abraham was willing to complete the act. The tension heightens as everything is laid in place, and Abraham reaches for the knife and raises it over his head to kill his son. Abraham, indeed, was willing to sacrifice his son in obedience to God.

III. The Blessings of Obedience.

- A. Sparing of the son (vs. 12)—God did not allow Abraham to kill Isaac. Abraham had shown that obedience to God was more important even than his son, Isaac. God did not want Isaac's death. He wanted Abraham's total obedience.
- B. Supplying of the substitute (vs. 13)—God provided a ram to be killed in the place of Isaac.

Conclusion:

A life of faith must be translated into a life of obedience. Most often, the demand of God for obedience comes in the form of the most unexpected testing. For Abraham, that testing brought him to the point of choosing between his son or his God. The furnace of testing is difficult, but the blessings are great.

THE FRUITFUL CHRISTIAN LIFE

Psalm 1

Introduction:

Farmers hope that the crops they plant will grow, prosper, and mature into a fruitful harvest. Anything less than fruitfulness is met with displeasure and disappointment. God has a similar desire for us in our Christian lives. He desires growth, productivity, and fruitfulness in our lives. Psalm 1 gives an outline for the fruitful Christian life.

- I. **What the Fruitful Christian Is (1:1a).**
 - A. "Blessed is the man" shows the kind of life fruitfulness brings.
 - B. "Happy" does not translate the word well, since happiness is often associated with circumstances.
 - C. Fruitfulness is what God desires, and fruitfulness brings meaningfulness and fulfillment to life.
- II. **What the Fruitful Christian Avoids (1:1b)**
 - A. "Walking...standing...sitting" shows the progression sin causes in the life of the Christian.
 - B. We are not to pattern out lives after those who are "out-of-focus," "missing the mark," and "off-centered."
- III. **What the Fruitful Christian Embraces (1:2).**
 - A. The reason the Christian can avoid the dangers of verse 1 is because of what that individual embraces in verse 2.
 - B. "His delight," or joy of life is God's instruction.
 1. "Delight" comes from the root meaning "to bend or curve," thus Christians are to bend their hearts toward God's word.
 2. "Law," or "torah," literally means "instruction" or "teaching."
 - C. "He meditates" indicates a careful consideration of God's law.
 1. The word can indicate a muttering under one's breath.
 2. The idea is a careful, thoughtful contemplation of what God is saying, and such contemplation will then lead to obedience to God.
- IV. **What the Fruitful Christian Embodies (1:3).**
 - A. The godly life is firmly rooted.
 1. A tree by the water never lacks for nourishment nor life-giving water.
 2. The tree is firmly rooted in the earth, not influenced by the winds of change about it.
 - B. The godly life bears fruit.
 1. The purpose of a tree is to bear fruit. The same is true for the Christian.
 2. Fruit-bearing is natural for a tree. For the Christian, fruit is the outgrowth of the inner relationship with God. The stronger the relationship with God, the more godly fruit our lives bear.
 - C. The godly life is useful.
 1. "Prosper" means more than monetary goods. In fact, the idea of prosperity defined as financial security is not in view here at all.
 2. Prosperity toward God has to do with our usefulness, which comes from our relationship with God.

Conclusion:

God desires stability, fruitfulness, and usefulness from our lives as Christians. The way to assure those characteristics in our lives is plain: avoid the temptations that come our way and saturate our lives with the Word of God.

PASSOVER NIGHT

Exodus 12

Introduction:

The Hebrews had experienced the miraculous work of God through the ten plagues. Of all the plagues they witnessed, none was as devastating as the final plague. Never was night so dark in Egypt as it was when the Lord swept through the land on Passover night. Of all that can be said about Passover night, consider with me three lessons to be learned.

I. The Sorrow of the Night (12:12, 30).

The tragedy of this night was physical and spiritual for the Egyptians.

- A. Death visited every Egyptian house (v.30). Man and beast alike wailed in grief. Death snatched life from their firstborn.
- B. Their gods proved to be powerless and futile in their night of need (v. 12). The objects and philosophical ideas tagged as deity and worshipped in Egypt did not protect them from the only true and living God.

II. The Salvation of the Night (12:22-23).

Only one substance guaranteed salvation. Only the blood of the lamb upon the lintel and door posts spared a household from death (vs. 22-23). We learn two simple truths:

- A. The blood applied brought safety and salvation.
- B. The blood denied brought tragedy and torment. No other substitute for the blood of the lamb would work.

III. The Significance of the Night.

At least three significant lessons are taught with great clarity in our text.

- A. God is a God of retribution.
"Whatsoever a man sows, that shall he also reap." (Gal. 6:7-8) The Egyptians

had sown death and sorrow; therefore, they reaped a harvest of death and sorrow. "Be sure your sin will find you out." (Num. 32-23)

- B. Salvation is found only in the blood of the lamb. Only the blood of the lamb upon the lintel and door posts protected a house from the destroyer (v. 23). Jesus is the "Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world." (John 1:29) "And the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin." (1 John 1:7)
- C. There is no hiding place. The Lord visited every house in the land on Passover night. "And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must all give account." (Hebrews 4:13)

Conclusion:

Every man is destined for a personal Passover night, when the Lord will examine the door of his heart for the blood of the Lamb of God. The blood of Jesus applied brings salvation and safety. The blood of Jesus not found brings tragedy and torment!

CHALLENGES SHE HAD TO OVERCOME

Mark 5:25-34

Introduction:

For twelve years the daily grind of despair had taken its toll. The lady in this story had an "issue of blood" (v. 25), and had exhausted her resources in search for a cure. No cure had been found. Religiously unclean, socially ostracized, and without question, a stressed family life, this lady lived with loneliness, longed for friendship and was losing hope of ever being healed. Jesus represented the last and only hope for the healing she desperately desired, but she had to overcome some major challenges to get to Jesus.

I. The First Challenge This Lady Had to Overcome Was the Rumor Itself (5:27).

- A. "When she heard about Jesus" leads us to wonder what may have gone through her mind.
1. Is this man Jesus for real?
 2. Could Jesus heal me of this affliction?"
 3. Would Jesus be willing to heal me of this affliction if He could?
 4. In the midst of this crowd, can I even find Him?
- B. Whatever mental challenges she faced, she overcame them. As a result she approached Jesus from behind.

II. The Second Challenge This Lady Had to Overcome Was the "Thronging Multitude" (5:24, 27, 31).

- A. What kind of people made up this thronging multitude between the lady and Jesus?
1. The curious were present, no doubt. They wanted to see Jesus perform a miracle or hear some great word of wisdom.
 2. Those sympathetic to Jesus were present, no doubt. They hailed Jesus as champion of the poor and needy.

3. Skeptics were present, no doubt. They sought every opportunity possible to catch Jesus in an error and question His integrity.
 4. At least one desperate person was present. This desperate lady with an issue of blood faced the challenge of a pressing, thronging crowd.
- B. The elbows, jeering remarks, jockeying for position, and other challenges of this pressing, thronging multitude were overcome only to face another challenge.

III. The Third Challenge This Lady Faced Was the Disciples Themselves (5:31).

- A. The disciples had become self-appointed bodyguards, and they attempted to protect Jesus from the pressing crowd (as if Jesus needed their protection).
- B. The disciples positioned themselves between Jesus and the crowd. They were determined not to let anyone get to Him.
- C. The disciples were indifferent to the needs of the people.

In spite of the disciples' best efforts to protect Jesus from the people, this determined lady overcame their challenge. She reached through their web of protection, touched Jesus' clothes, and was healed.

Conclusion:

You, too, can have a new life through Jesus Christ. Acknowledge your need, believe that Jesus is the Son of God, and that He can and will meet your need, then ask Him to take control of your life and use you to cause others to respect and honor Him.

THERE IS HOPE
Ezekiel 37:1-14

Introduction:

Ezekiel's experience has been interpreted in a variety of different ways. Many commentators interpret the events Ezekiel experienced as images of the resurrection. God's miraculous work is evident in the experience of the widow's son at Zarephath (1 Kings 17:22) and the Shunammite woman's son (2 Kings 4:35). To conclude that the emphasis in Ezekiel 37 is the theme of resurrection is possible. However, we would be remiss if we did not view this passage in light of the circumstances at hand in Ezekiel's day.

Ezekiel dealt with a group of people who were in despair, who were captive slaves and living in a foreign territory. God's message to Ezekiel, and to us today, is simple. We can find hope in God.

Let's look at this passage of Scripture and seek to answer three questions:

1. What was God doing?
2. What was Ezekiel doing?
3. What was the outcome?

I. What Was God Doing on that Eventful Day? (37:1-3)

- A. God placed His hand upon Ezekiel. This was not the first time God had done this (3:14; 3:22; 8:1). God used these experiences as a means of preparing Ezekiel for the experience he would have on that eventful day.
- B. God showed Ezekiel a valley of dry bones and asked if the bones could live again. God showed Ezekiel a hopeless situation. The valley of dry bones was comparable to the situation the people of Israel were facing in Babylonian exile.
- C. God was at work in what seemed to be a hopeless situation. In our times of

despair, we can hold to the truth that God is working in our lives.

II. What Was Ezekiel Doing on That Eventful Day? (37:4-10)

- A. God asked Ezekiel a difficult question in verse 3. Ezekiel responded to God by saying that only He knows the answer to the question. He was affirming that such an ability resides only in God.
- B. Ezekiel prophesied twice to the bones as God commanded him. God gave Ezekiel a decisive role in this event.
- C. Ezekiel listened and learned as God explained the events to him. His role was one of obedience and faithfulness to God's leadership in his life.
- D. We need to follow Ezekiel's example. We should be willing to listen, to learn, and to follow God's leadership in our lives.

III. What Was the Outcome on That Eventful Day? (37:11-14)

- A. The despair in the lives of the exiles would soon turn to hope. God said He would bring them home to the land of Israel.
- B. The stagnated life of the people would soon return to life. There would be joy in the life of the people once again.
- C. Ezekiel's message was a message of hope. The message of Christ for us is one of hope from the despair of sin.

Conclusion:

We need to ask ourselves the same three questions. What is Christ doing in your life today? What are we doing for Christ today? What is the result of Christ's work in our lives? Only you can truthfully answer these three questions.

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