

LESSON 5 The Message of Preaching

We have learned that New Testament preaching included various methods of spreading the gospel. Believers went everywhere preaching the message of salvation and telling the good news. Through their own personal testimonies and dynamic witness, they made tremendous impact on their culture. New Testament preaching also referred to the more formal and structured approach, in which a person spoke by giving a sermon in a manner similar to present-day preaching. Whether they talked to one or preached to many, their message was the same: the gospel of Jesus Christ. Later, Paul instructed Timothy to preach the Word to believers to “correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction” (2 Timothy 4:2). This latter ministry served to bring believers to maturity and help them avoid false doctrine.

In this lesson we consider four major subject areas of New Testament preaching for use in the more formal, structured preaching situations. The first two, Salvation and Reconciliation, relate primarily to the unsaved, while Sanctification and Hope are primarily for the believer. The material for each subject is not arranged as a sermon; rather, it is a shortened statement of the important content available for you to expand as you preach the whole counsel of God. May you find it helpful.

lesson outline

The Message of Salvation

The Message of Reconciliation

The Message of Sanctification

The Message of Hope

lesson objectives

When you finish this lesson you should be able to:

1. Discuss the effects of sin.
2. Describe how Christ the Savior is the solution for sin and spiritual death.
3. State the meaning of reconciliation as used in the Bible.
4. Explain the term sanctification as used in the Bible.
5. Explain how the hope of Christ's coming and the eventual judgment of believer's works affect Christian living.

learning activities

1. Read the opening section, outline, and objectives.
2. Learn the meanings of any key words that are new to you.
3. Work through the lesson development in the usual manner. When you have finished, take the self-test and check your answers.

key words

accountability
antagonist

bema
reconciliation

sanctification

lesson development

THE MESSAGE OF SALVATION

Of all the themes of biblical preaching, none is more important than communicating the good news of salvation. Without a response to the salvation message there would be no purpose for other messages. Jesus commanded His followers, “Go and make disciples of all nations” proclaiming the message of salvation for a witness to all people (Matthew 28:19). Moreover, Jesus made clear the issue at stake: “Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned” (Mark 16:16; John 3:15–21, 36). Nothing less than eternal life versus eternal death is at stake when the message of salvation is preached.

Years ago Matthew Simpson captured the awesome responsibility of preaching as he wrote in *Lectures on Preaching*: “His throne is the pulpit; he stands in Christ’s stead; his message is the word of God; around him are immortal souls; the Savior, unseen, is beside him; the Holy Spirit broods over the congregation; angels gaze upon the scene, and heaven and hell await the issue. What associations, and what vast responsibility!”

In presenting the message of salvation, two things must be emphasized: 1) that all people are sinners, and 2) that Christ is their Savior if they will accept His provision of salvation. However, many people do not understand their problem or what can change their situation. We must show them the basic problem: that people are sinners.

People Are Sinners

Objective 1. *Discuss the effects of sin.*

If you are like most people you see a world of sickness, disease, suffering, greed, hatred, violence, war, and death. These problems are universal. Many people wonder: What is the source of these problems? What is the solution? The Bible teaches that


the source of all human problems is sin. But what is sin? Sin is openly breaking God's law or failure to live according to God's law. Sin is more than just disobedience: it is the exalting of self and the ignoring of God. Exalting oneself may be demonstrated by ignoring the spiritual part of one's life, refusing to include God in thoughts, plans, words, and actions. However this attitude shows itself, it is displeasing to God. It is sin.

Application

1 Every person has become a sinner in two ways. Read the following Scriptures and name these two ways.

a) Romans 5:12–19

b) Romans 3:10–18, 23



Adam's sin has been charged to all people, because Adam was the representative head of the human race. When he fell, the race fell, and all people inherited a sinful nature. The sinful nature is responsible for people's stubbornness, rebellion, and disobedience toward the law of God (Galatians 5:19–21). The sinful nature causes people to commit sinful acts.

The result of people's sin is separation from God and from one another. Because of their sinful nature, people are corrupt. Every part of their human nature—emotions, intellect, and will—has been affected. They are totally helpless and unable to save themselves.

Their minds have been so corrupted by sin that they cannot understand and appreciate spiritual things (1 Corinthians 2:14). To them spiritual things are foolish and unreasonable. Without spiritual understanding they cannot grasp the things of God.

Application

- 2** Read the following Scriptures and answer each question.
- a)** Romans 6:15–20 says that non-Christians are of sin.
 - b)** Romans 8:6 says that those who are controlled by their human nature can only expect spiritual
 - c)** Romans 8:7 states that when a person is controlled by his human nature he becomes and does not and cannot
 - d)** Romans 8:8 declares that those who obey their human nature cannot



From these observations we conclude that:

- 1. All people are affected by the Fall and they cannot think, will, or do what pleases God.
- 2. On occasion, because of God's grace, people may do a good deed and be considered relatively good. But their lives do not please God as long as they are controlled by their human natures.
- 3. People's ability to choose and act is limited by their slavery to sin (Romans 6:17, 20).
- 4. The only freedom from slavery to sin is God's salvation. Then people will be controlled by the Spirit and will be able to please God.

Application

- 3** Analyze Acts 17:16–31. This is Paul's message to the city council in Athens. Now answer the following questions.
- a)** Paul says that previously God sin, because of people's ignorance of God and His law.
 - b)** However, Paul states that as the gospel is preached, God commands everywhere to

- c)** All people must turn away from their sins, because a day is coming in which God will
- d)** The response to Paul's message of salvation was that some people while others
- 4** Compare Peter's appeal to people at the conclusion of his message in the temple (Acts 3:17–26) with Paul's appeal to the city council of Athens (Acts 17:29–31). Use your notebook for this response.



Because sin is the source of human problems, we must preach sermons that deal with sin, its causes, consequences, and cure. You may choose to begin with a study of the Fall, its results for people, and God's provision for the sinner in the Genesis account (Genesis 1–3). Or, you may preach from Paul's epistle to the Romans, especially chapters 3–8. Or you may decide to pursue James' excellent analysis of the way sin functions to deceive people (James 1:12–15). Jesus' temptation in the Gospel accounts provides useful insights into the activity of Satan, who seeks to destroy people through temptation. Ephesians 2:13 clearly presents the gospel in one verse:

- What we were – “far away”
- What we are now – “in Christ Jesus”
- What we enjoy now – “brought near”
- When we enjoy this – “now”
- How we received this – “through the blood of Christ”

Application

- 5** What are the affects of sin and what will solve the problem? Write in your notebook an answer to this question.



Christ the Savior

Objective 2. *Describe how Christ the Savior is the solution for sin and spiritual death.*

The second part of the theme of salvation is that Jesus Christ is the only solution for the problem of sin. Since sin results in spiritual death, a person must be reborn spiritually. Always remember that when you preach about the problem of sin, you must also include the message of hope offered by the Savior. Just as people were born into their respective families, they must be born into the family of God.

The Scottish science professor and evangelist Henry Drummond used to illustrate this truth by reminding his university students that they had to distinguish five kingdoms in this world. The lowest of them, the mineral kingdom, possesses no life at all. The vegetable kingdom, the animal kingdom, and the human kingdom all have life; and the highest kingdom of all, God's kingdom, is the source of all life. The point Drummond made was that no lower kingdom can push its way into the next higher kingdom, but each kingdom can reach down and pull the other kingdoms up.

Minerals cannot transform themselves into plants, but plants can reach into the mineral kingdom and transform mineral into vegetable. Animals eat the plants and transform vegetable into animal, and humans eat animal flesh and transform it into human flesh. In salvation, God reaches down into the human kingdom and lifts believing sinners into His divine kingdom.

This is what Jesus did when He came to earth and died on the Cross. Jesus said, “No one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven—the Son of Man” (John 3:13).

Too many people have the notion that they have to “pull themselves up” into God's family through devout religious practices and good works before they can enter the kingdom of God; but this idea is wrong. The truth is that God “saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his

mercy” (Titus 3:5). Sinners can no more work their way into God’s family than robots can work their way into the human family.

Spiritual birth requires that people repent of their sins (Acts 2:37–39) and turn from them completely. They must also put their trust in Jesus for the forgiveness of sins (Acts 16:30–31) and confess that He is the Lord of their life (Romans 10:9–10). As people accept the provisions of salvation, they are born again by the Spirit of God (2 Corinthians 5:17). As the Spirit takes control of their lives, they become spiritually alive (Romans 8:10) and aware of their relationship to God as His children (Romans 8:14–16).

What a joy it is to know that we are free to turn to God, to repent, and to believe. This assurance is given to us in Scripture.

Application

6 Read Matthew 3:2; 18:3; Luke 13:3, 5; John 6:29; Acts 2:38; 3:19. What do these portions of Scripture teach us about people’s freedom? Use your notebook for this response.

It is clear that all people are commanded to repent of their sins and turn to the Savior. And if we are not free to respond to these commands, the commands would be nothing more than a mockery of people’s slavery to sin, without force or real meaning. However, with the help of God, people can will and act according to God’s good purpose: repenting of their sins, believing in the Savior, and accepting His salvation. Philippians 2:12–13 teach that God gives us what is needed to trust in Him.

The New Testament message of salvation was Jesus Christ the Lord (Acts 8:5; Philippians 1:15). The gospel message included His virgin birth, sinless life, death, resurrection, and exaltation to the right hand of God. The early church knew and preached no other message. Paul preached Christ crucified

(1 Corinthians 2:2), and Peter proclaimed the name of Jesus as the only means of salvation (Acts 4:12).

Application

7 Analyze the sermons of Peter (Acts 2:14–41; 3:12–26; 10:34–43) and Paul (Acts 13:16–41) for their content. Place the verse or verses where each item mentioned at the left is stated specifically or implied in each sermon.

Jesus'	2:14–41	3:12–26	10:34–43	13:16–41
a) Davidic descent				
b) Sinless life				
c) Divinely accredited ministry				
d) Predetermined crucifixion				
e) Resurrection				
f) Exaltation				
g) Response called for				



In summary, the New Testament message of preaching consists of two major topics: 1) Christ Jesus as Lord and Savior in fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies, and 2) an appeal to repentance, faith, and confession of the Lordship of Jesus. This pattern of proclamation and appeal can be seen in a number of places in the New Testament, including the Parable of the Great Feast (Luke 14:16–24).

Those who ministered in New Testament times gave messages of faith based on the Old Testament writings and the teachings of Jesus. Then they appealed to listeners to act in faith upon the message they had heard. All those who believed were saved, and the power of the gospel was thus demonstrated (Romans 1:16–17).

Application

- 8** The solution for people's sin and spiritual death is Christ the Savior
- a)** if people add to their knowledge of Christ membership in a church.
 - b)** because as people repent of their sins, believe in Christ, and accept Him as Lord, they are born spiritually.
 - c)** because if only people are sincere in their beliefs about the ability of Christ to save, they can be saved by their mental agreement.
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THE MESSAGE OF RECONCILIATION

Man to God

Objective 3. *State the meaning of reconciliation as used in the Bible.*

Another aspect of the message of salvation is that of reconciliation. To reconcile is to restore to fellowship or to make peace. The people among whom we live and work are sinners and therefore enemies of God. As we have seen, the broken relations between God and people were caused by people's sin (Genesis 3:8–10; Isaiah 59:2). But Christ died to remove their sins, which were the cause of this hostility and separation. In restoring fellowship between God and people, God took the first step to correct the problem. The apostle Paul affirms, "While we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8). Moreover, "God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ" (2 Corinthians 5:19). The message of reconciliation, therefore,

concerns the adjustment of differences between God and people. It makes things right. Through Jesus Christ redeemed people can walk with God again.

The church has been given a message and ministry of reconciliation. As a believer, you have made your peace with God. Now, as one who ministers to alienated and troubled people, you have been given a ministry of peace-making. You are to act on God's behalf to persuade them to be reconciled to God (2 Corinthians 5:18–21).

Application

9 Have you ever wronged or provoked a good friend and later been reconciled to him? What were his feelings? What were your feelings? Read Luke 15. What do you learn from this chapter about God's feelings? Write in your notebook answers to these questions.



Man to Man

After a person is reconciled to God, he or she becomes responsible for the ministry of reconciling sinners to God (2 Corinthians 5:18). Just as God was making peace in the world through Christ, so all of us who are believers are challenged to be ambassadors for Christ. God is making His appeal to people through us. Action is imperative at this point! Either we persuade our hearers to be active in soul-winning or they will settle down to inactivity within their group, while multitudes around them go into eternity without God. Inactive Christians soon become powerless, without vision, critical, and divisive. Your task is to show those to whom you minister the privilege that is theirs to persuade people to make their peace with God by accepting Christ the Savior. The people to whom you preach can be a dynamic, soul-winning body upon whom God's blessings rest, or they can be a self-centered, visionless people who go through the motions of worship without ever fulfilling their God-given

responsibilities. Reconciliation begins with you and God. But it must move, without limitation, to others who are outside God's peace.

Application

10 The word *reconciliation* in the Bible expresses the idea that

- a)** when one is sold into the slavery of sin, he must be purchased back.
 - b)** the wrath of God over the sins of people must be appeased.
 - c)** the fellowship between God and people, which was disrupted by sin, is restored.
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THE MESSAGE OF SANCTIFICATION

A third theme of New Testament preaching is sanctification. Whereas the previous themes dealt primarily with a person's salvation experience, sanctification is related to the growth and maturity of this experience. If the people to whom you preach do not hear messages relating to sanctification, they will remain spiritual babies (1 Corinthians 3:1–3), never growing in Christlikeness (Romans 8:29). This theme, then, is a vital part of your preaching ministry.

The Christian Life

Objective 4. *Explain the term sanctification as used in the Bible.*

To sanctify is to separate from normal or profane use and to dedicate to holy service. People, places, or things may be dedicated. For instance, what was once a shop or store may now be used as a church. As such, it is separated or dedicated for the work of the Lord. Christians are people who have been separated from an old way of life and dedicated to a new way of life.

Spiritual life begins when a person experiences the new birth (John 3:1–8), and this new life in the Spirit should develop and mature (John 15:1–17). As new creatures in Christ, our goal is to

be like Him in our thoughts, words, and actions (Ephesians 4:20–24). This desire to be like Him is our initial response to the new birth experience; however, our old habits leave their mark on us and hinder this development. Our past life was characterized by self-centeredness, since we were under the control of our sinful human nature (Galatians 5:19–21; Romans 8:5–9). But now as we submit to the control of the Spirit, the Spirit produces fruit in us (Galatians 5:22–26).

Consider the example of a baby. He has the potential for adulthood as soon as he is born, but he becomes an adult only by a process of growth and development. In the same way, as spiritual babes we have the potential for spiritual maturity, but we mature spiritually only as we keep in step with the Spirit (Galatians 5:25) and as we grow in grace and knowledge of Christ (2 Peter 3:18). The old human desires must be resisted and put to death as we walk in the Spirit. Each day we ratify our decision to live for Christ by following the Spirit's desires (Romans 8:5–9).

The Christians in Corinth experienced a dramatic spiritual change as a result of their new birth (1 Corinthians 6:9–11). But as they continued in the faith, they experienced some difficulty in progressing from their stage of spiritual infancy toward spiritual maturity (compare 1 Corinthians 3:1–4 with 6:1–11). Fortunately for them and us, the ministry of the Lord through His servants provides strength, unity, and direction so that we may be stable in our faith as we mature and become progressively more like Christ (Ephesians 4:10–16).

Application

11 In the following exercise, circle the letters of the TRUE statements that explain the term *sanctification*.

- a)** Sanctification refers to a life of absolute perfection in which Christians no longer sin or make mistakes.
- b)** Sanctification concerns setting a person, place, or thing apart from secular use and dedicating it to sacred service.

- c) Spiritual life, which is characterized by growth, development, and maturity in Christlikeness, is the essence of sanctification.
 - d) Sanctification is intended only for those in the ministry, who need special grace and knowledge. All other Christians are a part of the world system and are not dedicated to Christ.
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The Word Our Guide

The newborn Christian must be encouraged to pursue holiness. We are solemnly warned that we must “make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord” (Hebrews 12:14; 2 Corinthians 7:1). This pursuit of holiness will lead us to the Word of God. Jesus said in His prayer to the Father, ““Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth”” (John 17:17). And Paul declares that “all Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work” (2 Timothy 3:16–17).

The Word reveals sin, stirs our conscience, reveals the nature of God and the example of Christ, shows the influence and power of the Spirit available to us, and represents the final authority on all matters of teaching and practice in the Christian life. With all that being true, the Word is absolutely essential for Christian living.

As we hear and obey the Word of God, we build our Christian life on a firm foundation, unlike the foolish man who built his house upon the sand (Matthew 7:24–26). Through the Word we are cleansed (John 15:3; Ephesians 5:26) and set apart for God (John 17:17). We can do no better than follow the advice God gave to Joshua in the matter of giving priority to the Word of God: “Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful” (Joshua 1:8).

Application

12 Describe the role of the Word of God in the process of sanctification. Write the answer in your notebook.



The Spirit Our Help

We have seen that the new birth brings new life and that the Word of God is our guide in living the new life. Now we consider the role of the Holy Spirit in sanctification as the one who gives us the inner desire to live the Christian life.

Old Testament believers had the law of Moses as a guide, but even that could not give liberty from sin because human nature was weak (Romans 8:3). God has given us His Spirit so we can do what He wants. Then we will not be controlled by human nature (Romans 8:5–6, 9). The Spirit within not only reveals the truth and shows what God demands, but also gives the power to obey the commands of God as we yield to Him. It is the Spirit who enables us to live free from the power of sin (Romans 8:12–13), and produces spiritual fruit (Galatians 5:22–25). The Spirit gives us an inner desire to do right.

We might compare the role of the Holy Spirit in sanctification to that of an antagonist on the field of battle. Before the new birth, when the old self was under the control of the sinful nature, sin ruled and there was no spiritual life. At the time of the new birth, however, the Holy Spirit who comes to dwell within, entered the conflict and seized the initiative as He assumed control of the new life. As the Spirit-controlled person yields to Him, the ground occupied by the old self is progressively conquered. As the Spirit indwells the believer, we “are being transformed into his [Christ’s] likeness with ever-increasing glory” (2 Corinthians 3:18).

The message of sanctification is vital to the development of spiritual life. The people to whom you preach will profit greatly from sermons you present that give additional light on this theme.

Application

13 In the following exercise place 1 in front of the statements that state how the Holy Spirit helps us to live an acceptable Christian life and 2 in front of those that do NOT.

- ... **a** The Holy Spirit creates the inner desire to live the Christ-centered life.
 - ... **b** Because of the rebelliousness of human nature, the Holy Spirit makes us serve Christ acceptably.
 - ... **c** The work of the Holy Spirit within the human life is related to the degree to which a person yields to the Spirit's direction.
 - ... **d** The Holy Spirit reveals the truth to us, shows us what God requires, and gives us the ability to do what God wants.
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THE MESSAGE OF HOPE

Objective 5. *Explain how the hope of Christ's coming and the eventual judgment of believer's works affect Christian living.*

The New Testament church was an expectant church. Jesus said, "In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am" (John 14:2–3).

Members of the early church eagerly anticipated the Lord's return. They did not believe that their generation would pass before Jesus returned. This blessed hope purified their living, energized a sense of urgency to their work, and gave them steadfast courage in the midst of severe persecution. Believers realized that beyond the present life lay a time of accountability for the kind of life they lived. The coming judgment sobered them and made them purpose to live in such a way that they could expect a reward for their service. This hope has served the church well for nearly 2,000 years and is

as precious today as it was to the early church. As you preach this theme, you will arouse hope in what is, apart from Christ, a hopeless world. You will also encourage responsible Christian living.

Occupy: Work and Serve

The New Testament church lived and worked in hope of the coming of the Lord. Hope inspired endurance for many who suffered intense persecution (1 Thessalonians 1:3; 2 Thessalonians 1:4). The apostle Paul was sensitive to the needs of these believers and to encourage them with specific instructions concerning the coming of the Lord (1 Thessalonians 4:13–18). He did not want Christians to be ignorant of the Lord’s coming or of their responsibilities as they awaited this event. Of course Jesus had already urged the necessity for faithful service in His ministry.

Application

14 Read Matthew 24:45–51; 25:14–30; Luke 12:35–40; and Acts 1:6–8 and answer the following questions.

- a)** The common theme in these Scriptures is the need for

b) These verses indicate that we are not to concern ourselves
 with the of the Master’s coming but rather with

c) It will be well for a servant if his Lord finds him
 and very bad
 for him if he has not



The Lord did not expect to have His disciples stand idly by waiting for His return. That is why He challenged them to preach the gospel everywhere (Act 1:8). Paul echoed this concern, saying, “Pray for us that the message of the Lord may spread rapidly” (2 Thessalonians 3:1). Nevertheless, as time went by and the Lord did

not come, Paul encouraged Thessalonian believers to take courage in the hope of their eventual salvation—whether they lived or died (see 1 Thessalonians 5:1–11). He specifically spoke against idleness (1 Thessalonians 5:14; 2 Thessalonians 3:6–12), and he and his fellow workers left an appropriate example for the Thessalonians by their own labor and work while they ministered in Thessalonica.

People tend to become discouraged and weary when they do not see a promise fulfilled. This may lead to apathy in regard to the return of Christ to earth. As one who preaches, you can show that not only did Jesus promise to return but also the angels bore witness to this event saying, “This same Jesus, . . . will come back” (Acts 1:11). Peter notes that many in the last days will make light of this promised event (2 Peter 3:3–9), since they do not understand the reason for the delay. In the meantime, we must heed the words of the apostle Paul: “Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain” (1 Corinthians 15:58).

Application

- 15** The message of the Lord’s coming should affect Christian living by
- a)** encouraging Christians to endure hardship and persecution because of this blessed hope.
 - b)** stimulating Christians to carry out the commands of the Lord to preach the gospel to every creature.
 - c)** producing anxiety in us because of the coming judgment we will face in which we will give account of our service.
 - d)** only the things mentioned in a) and b) above.
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Holiness of Life

The second coming of Christ is a powerful influence for godly living in the present evil world. Jesus warned His disciples repeatedly against developing a careless attitude toward His coming. In Mark 13:32–37, He put His coming into perspective for them:

“No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Be on guard! Be alert! You do not know when that time will come. It’s like a man going away: He leaves his house and puts his servants in charge, each with his assigned task, and tells the one at the door to keep watch. Therefore keep watch because you do not know when the owner of the house will come back—whether in the evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or at dawn. If he comes suddenly, do not let him find you sleeping. What I say to you, I say to everyone: ‘Watch!’”

We have been left in charge of His work, evangelizing this world. We have also been challenged to live holy and to grow in our love for one another as we await His coming (1 Thessalonians 3:12–13).

These responsibilities are sobering and should keep each of us from becoming “weighed down with dissipation, drunkenness and the anxieties of life” (Luke 21:34).

Application

16 Answer the questions related to each Scripture concerning our responsibility in view of the Lord’s return.

- a)** In Luke 12:35–40 the theme of the passage is
- b)** Luke 21:34–36 cautions us to
- c)** Matthew 24:42–51 reminds us to watch so that we will not become
- d)** 1 Thessalonians 5:6 urges us to be
as we await the day of the Lord.
- e)** In 1 Peter 4:7, Peter challenges us to be



The basis of Christian hope is the Lord’s coming. Our responsibilities, in view of this fact, are that we should be occupied with

the Lord's work, live holy lives, and mature in Christlikeness so that we can look forward to His coming without fear, shame, or embarrassment.

A boy was put in charge of the family's small farm for a day while his parents went to town on business. His father gave him certain jobs to do and warned him not to leave the farm. The boy quickly finished all the work, and in spite of the warning of his father, he left the farm to visit a friend on a farm near his. While he was playing with his friend, a thunderstorm struck suddenly. He rushed home and to his dismay found that the storm had blown rain into the house through the open windows. A valuable family Bible was damaged by the water. When he saw the Bible, his heart sank with dread at the thought of his parents' return. Because he had not been faithful to his responsibility, he was ashamed to face them when they arrived. In like manner, if we have not been obedient to the commands of the Lord we shall be ashamed to face Him at His coming. John refers to this: "Dear children, continue in him, so that when he appears we may be confident and unashamed before him at his coming" (1 John 2:28). The blessed hope of the coming of the Lord is one of the believer's greatest motives for living a pure and productive life (1 John 3:3).

Application

17 Circle the letters in front of each statement that explains how the hope of Christ's coming should affect Christian living.

- a)** Knowing that Christ could come at any moment, Christians should try to predict when the time will be so that they can stop work and wait in prayer for Him to appear.
- b)** Knowledge of His coming should help each Christian to purify himself in anticipation of living forever in His holy presence.
- c)** The fact that He is coming should stimulate each of us to be faithful in carrying out His commands to evangelize the world and to reflect His nature.
- d)** Knowledge of Christ's coming should keep us from evil or from anything that would come between Him and us, or that would make us unfit for heaven.



Judgment and Reward

Paul used the figure of athletic games to describe the Christian life (1 Corinthians 9:24–27). In keeping with this analogy, he compares the rewards given in athletic games with the rewards given to Christians at the judgment seat of Christ. The word translated “judgment seat” comes from the Greek word *bema*, which means literally, in this context, “review stand.” The *bema* was thus a raised platform where the judges sat to view the games and give the awards. Paul refers to this when he writes to the Corinthians:

So we make it our goal to please him, whether we are at home in the body or away from it. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad. (2 Corinthians 5:9–10)

The judgment of Christians will take place soon after they have been translated into God’s presence. Only Christians will be present! The purpose of this judgment is to evaluate the service of each Christian to determine rewards, not to evaluate faith for salvation (Romans 14:10–12). Notice that Paul includes himself in this evaluation. The works we have done while in this life will be tested carefully. Things done because of impure motives (see 1 Corinthians 13:1–3) will be represented as wood, hay, or straw for these materials are impermanent and easily destroyed by fire. And no reward will be given for these works. In God’s presence they will be judged fit only for the fire. However, works or services which have been prompted by the love of God and concern for His work will be represented as gold, silver, and costly stones, for these materials are permanent and will stand the test of fire. He will judge them worthy of reward (1 Corinthians 3:14). Again, it is important to emphasize that this judgment of believers is not to determine whether they will be saved or lost; rather, it is to determine what reward will be given for the works done in this life.

Jesus spoke of reward for faithfulness in the Parable of the Ten Minas (Luke 19:11–27). As we become more aware of facing the Lord and giving account of our Christian service, we will do all we can to serve Him with sincere hearts and pure motives.

Application

18 Read 1 Corinthians 3:10–15 and choose the statement that best summarizes what the passage teaches about Christian responsibility and the judgment and reward for service.

- a)** Christians begin their spiritual life by building upon the foundation of Christ. Obedience to His commands, faithful service, and proper motives bring reward; whereas, failure in these areas means loss of reward.
- b)** The amount of service one does brings reward; therefore, those who fail to do a significant amount of work are not rewarded. Quantity of work, then, brings reward.
- c)** One need not be concerned about the quantity of work done, burdens shared for Christ, or even motives for service. Quality is the important thing. A few truly good works are much more important than the quantity of works one does.

Believers' works are rewarded at the judgment seat of Christ. Unbelievers of all ages will be judged later at the final judgment. When all those who have not accepted Christ stand before God and their names are not found in the book of life, they will be sent into eternal punishment (Revelation 20:11–15). In view of this we are compelled by the love of Christ to preach the gospel to the lost before it is too late.

In one of our large cities, a crew of men was digging a deep ditch to bury a new telephone cable. Suddenly the walls caved in, burying three of the workmen. Instantly the others went to work to free the men from the death trap. A large crowd gathered. One man stood by with very little apparent concern as the others worked desperately to free the trapped men. After a few minutes a friend rushed up to him and said, "Jim, your brother is in

that ditch!” When he heard this, the man threw off his coat and jumped into the ditch to help save his brother.

When each of us realizes that every man and woman is our brother and sister for whom Christ has died, we too will spare no effort to see them saved. The love of God poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit will help us love them just as Christ loves them. And we must help free them from the pit of sin and bring them to God.

As you preach the truths that concern future privileges and accountability, you will be able to stimulate those who are living weak, ineffective Christian lives to change while there is time. You will be able to encourage those who are suffering for His name’s sake to overcome by His grace. The supply of sermon material from “The Message of Hope” is indeed great, for it abounds in the pages of Scripture from Genesis to Revelation. You will profit from in-depth study in this subject area.

Application

19 Explain how the judgment and rewarding of believers gives an incentive to live effective Christian lives. Use your notebook for this response.



self-test

TRUE-FALSE. Write T in the blank space if the statement is TRUE. Write F if the statement is FALSE.

- ... **1** The “Message of Salvation” is the basic one because without a positive response to it there would be no need for other messages.
- ... **2** Sin, which resulted in people’s separation from God and one another, is the source of people’s problems.
- ... **3** The solution for the problem of sin is education, abundant good works, and knowledge of one’s own abilities.
- ... **4** Spiritual death caused by sin can only be remedied by spiritual rebirth, which occurs as we place our faith in Christ the Savior.
- ... **5** The reason we have many themes in our preaching is that variety appeals to people and wins their support.
- ... **6** Spiritual life must be nourished by feeding on the Word of God, strengthened by fellowship with the Lord, and exercised by sharing the good news with those we meet.
- ... **7** Reconciliation is a theme that deals with the adjustment of differences between God and people.
- ... **8** Although believers have been reconciled to God, they have no direct responsibility to reconcile other people to God, since this is a responsibility for church leaders only.
- ... **9** The “Message of Sanctification” deals with the subject of growth and development in the Christian experience.
- ... **10** The “Message of Sanctification” is that Christians become gradually sinless and perfect at some point after their new birth experience.

- . . . **11** The “Message of Hope” has great value because it encourages urgency in service, holy living, steadfast courage in difficult times, and responsible work in carrying out assigned tasks.
- . . . **12** The coming of the Lord will occur at a prearranged time which God set long ago and is unrelated to any Christian task.
- . . . **13** The exhortation to watch is given to all believers because of the human tendency to become careless when a long-awaited event seems unfulfilled.
- . . . **14** Being ready for Christ’s coming is related directly to Christian responsibility.
- . . . **15** Christians will stand in judgment so that their lives can be evaluated in terms of Christian service, motives for service, and results achieved.

answers to study questions

- 10 c)** the fellowship between God and people, which was disrupted by sin, is restored.
- 1 a)** Because of Adam's sin, all people are guilty of sin and subject to its consequences.
- b)** Every person is guilty of sinful acts.
- 11 a)** False
- b)** True
- c)** True
- d)** False
- 2 a)** slaves
- b)** death.
- c)** an enemy of God, obey God's laws.
- d)** please God.
- 12** Your answer. The Word of God provides a means by which we can know God's will for our lives, what is right and wrong behavior, how we can grow in Christlikeness, what power is available to us as we live for Christ in a wicked world, how to discriminate between the spirit of error and the Spirit of truth, and what God says about any given matter of faith and practice.
- 3 a)** overlooked.
- b)** all people, repent.
- c)** judge the world with justice.
- d)** sneered, joined him and believed.
- 13 a** 1) How the Spirit helps
- b** 2) Not true of the Spirit
- c** 1) How the Spirit helps
- d** 1) How the Spirit helps
- 4** Your answer. Both men mention the ignorance of God's salvation and both call for repentance for forgiveness of sins. Peter points out that with forgiveness comes acceptance with

God and blessing; however, he also notes that God's blessings are further conditioned by people's obedience to God's law. Paul refers to the coming judgment as the reason why people should turn from their sins to serve the living God. He also states that God has commanded all people everywhere to turn from their sins.

14 a) faithful service.

b) time, doing His work.

c) faithful in his responsibilities, carried out his Master's commands.

5 Your answer. Sin has affected every part of human nature. Our sinful nature is opposed to God and cannot please Him. People are thus slaves to sin and are separated from God. They face eternal punishment for their sin. The only cure is to be reborn spiritually by trusting in Jesus Christ, God's provision for salvation.

15 d) only the things mentioned in a) and b) above.

6 Your answer. They are all directed to people, urging them to do something. If they were not free to respond, then these commands would be meaningless.

16 a) being ready.

b) be careful and watchful.

c) careless.

d) awake and sober.

e) self-controlled and alert.

8 b) because as they repent of their sins . . .

18 a) Christians begin their spiritual life by building upon the foundation of Christ.

9 Your answer. There is great joy in God's presence when we return to Him.

19 Your answer. Since Christians are going to give an account of their Christian lives, they have every reason to strive conscientiously to carry out the commands of their Lord to

evangelize, live purely, and serve with proper motives. The fact that unbelievers will be eternally lost should motivate Christians to do everything possible to see the lost won, for many are our own family, relatives, and friends.

7

Jesus'	2:14–41	3:12–26	10:34–43	13:16–41
a) Davidic descent	v. 30	v. 22		vv. 23–25
b) Sinless life	v. 22	v. 14	v. 39	v. 28
c) Divinely accredited ministry	v. 22	v. 25	v. 38	vv. 30–31
d) Predetermined crucifixion	v. 23	vv. 13–15, 18		vv. 28–29
e) Resurrection	vv. 24–32	v. 15	vv. 40–41	vv. 30, 33–37
f) Exaltation	vv. 33–36	vv. 13, 21	v. 36	v. 34
g) Response called for	vv. 38–39	vv. 19–20, 22–23	v. 43	vv. 38–40

- 17 b)** Knowledge of his coming should help each Christian . . .
c) The fact that he is coming should stimulate each of us to . . .
d) Knowledge of Christ's coming should keep us from . . .

8 b) because as they repent of their sins . . .

18 a) Christians begin their spiritual life by building upon the foundation of Christ.

9 Your answer. We learn that there is great joy in God's presence when we return to Him.