

THE TRUSTWORTHINESS OF SCRIPTURE

Matthew 26:47-56

— **Intro:** Tonight I want to introduce you to a very short, but very important, Greek word. It is the word, a verb, δεῖ. It is most often translated by the word *must*. It speaks of things which must of necessity take place. In many cases it speaks of a necessity which arises out of a divine appointment. Thus it speaks of things which are ordained by God. In these instances we have that which is equal to a decree of God, or that which is the counsel of God. See Thayer, p. 126. Thus, as other grammarians say, it is something which must, or must not, happen, something which has to happen, or will never happen, as the case may be. See Arndt and Gingrich, p. 171. William Hendriksen called it “the divine ‘must’” (Luke, p. 185). We find it in the language of our Lord at the age of twelve when He told his mother and Joseph, “Wist ye not that I must be about my Father’s business?” (Luke 2:49). Hendriksen expressed the meaning of that statement in this way: “‘I had to be’ or ‘I must be.’ The fact that his entire life was controlled by the divine ‘must,’ a ‘must’ which was in complete harmony with his own desire...dawned on the boy Jesus very early in life” (*Ibid.*).

— The word is very important because many times it is used of events in the life of our Lord, and especially with reference to His death and resurrection. It is a word which clearly expresses *the sovereignty of God*. We find it in such familiar expressions as our Lord’s word to Nicodemus when He said, “Ye must be born again.” We have it again in the words of John the Baptist which he said concerning our Lord, “He must increase, but I *must* decrease.” (The second “must” there is implied; it is not in the Greek text.) Our Lord told Zacchaeus, “To day I must abide at thy house.” To notice this word puts an entirely new light upon many passages of Scripture. This is the reason I have called this series, Divine Certainties.

Tonight I want to consider with you the way the Lord used this word in Matthew 26:54 with reference to the Scriptures, but to get the context of this verse, I am going to read to you verses 47 to 56. And I am starting with this usage because it has to do with the Scriptures, and this little word is one way God has had of helping us to understand *The Trustworthiness of Scripture*.

— (Read Matt. 26:47-56.)

I. THE SITUATION WHEN THE LORD USED THIS WORD

(Matt. 26:47-56).

Judas had come with a great number of people to arrest the Lord, and they were armed with swords and clubs. Matthew said that one of our Lord's disciples took out a sword and cut off the ear of a man who was a servant of the high priest. The Apostle John said that it was Peter. See John 18:10. He had said that he was ready to die with the Lord, and he meant what he had said. But the Lord rebuked him, and told him to put up his sword. And then He asked Peter the two questions which we find in verses 53 and 54.

Then the Lord spoke to His enemies, and asked them a question which was designed to make them ask themselves why they had not taken Him before. They had plenty of opportunities, but we know that the reason was because in the sovereignty of God His time had not yet come.

In my Bible the first part of verse 56 is in red letters, indicating that the Lord spoke those words, too. But I am more inclined that this was what we could call *an editorial comment* made by Matthew. The Lord certainly could have said it because it was completely true, but such comments were often made in the Gospels with reference to the Word of God.

We all know that the apostles were very slow to understand that the Lord was going to die, and so Peter was acting in ignorance of the Scriptures. Remember that this had to be *the Old Testament Scriptures* because the NT had not yet been written.

The verse that I want you to note in particular is verse 54. Peter did not understand the will of God regarding our Lord, but the Lord understood it perfectly and He knew that nothing could really stand in the way of the fulfillment of Scripture. "Thus it must be." This was the reason for which the Lord had come into the world. He had come to do the Father's will, and the Father's will was for Him to die as a sacrifice for all who would ever be saved.

It is important to see that the Lord would not stand in the way of the fulfillment of Scripture.

Now I am not thinking tonight of this truth as it relates to the death of our Lord, but I am concerned about what this tells us with respect to the Word of God. But if Scripture had to be fulfilled with where our Lord was concerned, then surely it is reliable in all that it has to say.

Now let me point out:

II. SOME RELATED PASSAGES OF SCRIPTURE.

A. Luke 24:25-26 and 44-48.

The first of these passages has to do with our Lord's ministry after His resurrection to those two disciples He joined on the road to Emmaus. They were confused about what had happened in Jerusalem when the Lord was crucified, and even more confused when they heard the report that He was alive. It was then that the Lord spoke to them using the word "must." However, it is given another translation here, and so it is easy to miss what the Lord said. Let me read the words to you.

25 Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken:

26 Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?

27 And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself (Luke 24:25-27).

What was the Lord telling them? He was saying that the death of our Lord was not the result of men pursuing their own hatred until they succeeded in killing Him, but this is what the prophets had predicted long before would happen to the Lord when He came.

What we read in verses 44-48 of Luke 24 tells us that practically the same things were said when our Lord later appeared to His apostles. This is what happened:

44 And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me.

45 Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures,

46 And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day:

47 And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.

48 And ye are witnesses of these things.

In both of these passages our Lord took His hearers to *all* of the OT

Scriptures, teaching His disciples again what He had taught them before. But what was their problem? They did not understand what the OT taught about the Messiah, that is, *all* that it taught, and therefore their faith was weak, and their behavior had been unbecoming to the truth of the Word.

And now let us go to the book of Acts to see that in a very short period of time Peter had learned some truth that he expressed to the disciples who were gathered together in the Upper Room. Please turn to:

B. Acts 1:16-18.

Peter was talking about Judas, and obviously had related Psa. 41:9 to what Judas had done. This is what Psa. 41:9 says:

Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me.

And so this is what Peter said to the other disciples, and his words are recorded in Acts 1:16-18:

16 Men and brethren, this scripture must needs have been fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David spake before concerning Judas, which was guide to them that took Jesus.

17 For he was numbered with us, and had obtained part of this ministry.

18 Now this man purchased a field with the reward of iniquity; and falling headlong, he burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out.

Don't you know how bewildered the disciples were that anyone among them could do what Judas had done. And evidently there had been much searching of the Scriptures during those days immediately following the ascension of our Lord. And they brought together Psa. 41:9 with Judas, and that is why Peter used the word "must." Judas was responsible for what he did, but in the sovereignty of God it was all a part of the divine plan, and it had to be done.

This all illustrates what the Lord said on another occasion when he had just quoted from Psa. 82, and He declared that "the scripture cannot be broken" (John 10:35).

Cf. also Matt. 24:35 where the Lord was speaking about the last days. And He was predicting terrible things that were to come on the earth. This is what He said: "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away."

We read this morning about Abraham's faith in the Word of God in that passage in Romans 4 beginning with verse 20:

- 20 He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God;
- 21 And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform (Rom 4:20-21).

Most of us know that wonderful 89th verse of Psalm 119 which tells us, "For ever, O Lord, thy word is settled in heaven." The saints of God of all generations have trusted implicitly in the Word of God. His promises are sure. Joshua rejoiced as he reached the end of his life that everything that the Lord had promised to the house of Israel had been fulfilled.

Much more could be said, but I want you to begin to notice that word "must" in Scripture if you have not already done so. It will strengthen your faith to know that God is working all things out according to the counsel of His own will, that He will never fail to stand by His Word, and that it is never a mistake to trust Him.

But let me give:

III. A FINAL WORD OF EXHORTATION.

We ought to learn from the mistakes that the disciples made. There problem was not that they did not have enough of the Word to help them. Whatever the people of God have had at any period in history, has, in the providence of God, been sufficient for their needs. Their problem was that they did not understand the Word. And they did not listen carefully and in faith as the Lord spoke to them about what was coming.

So our greatest need is to be reading the Word, and searching out the truths of the Word, and however it might run contrary to what we think God will do, we need to believe the Word. God is always faithful to His Word. As I mentioned this morning, there is never any need to revise what God has given us. It is infallible, and it is completely trustworthy. That has been proven again and again. And in these days of such brazen sinfulness, we need to remember that God's promises of judgment are just as certain as His promises of salvation.

Concl: So let us believe the Word, and experience the peace and the joy that knowing the Word brings to us by the grace of God.

CHRIST AND HIS FATHER'S BUSINESS

Luke 2:39-52

Intro: (Read the text.)

If you have a red letter edition of the NT, you can quickly see that the words in verse 49, which I want to consider with you tonight, are words which were spoken by our Lord Jesus Christ when he was only twelve years old. (See v. 42.) But what makes them even more important is that *they are the first words which our Lord spoke to be recorded in Scripture*. Without doubt He had often spoken before, but nothing that our Lord said during those first years of His life has been recorded for us in our Bibles. In fact, we have very little told us about the life of our Lord up to this point.

We know that His mother was a virgin, but that He had no human father. We know that He was born in Bethlehem, and that when He was eight days old He was taken to the temple where He was circumcised, and given the Name, Jesus. Early in His life Joseph and Mary took Him down into Egypt to keep Herod from killing Him. When they came back into Judaea, they did not live there, but moved on up into Galilee where they made their home in Nazareth. From that time until He was twelve years of age, Scripture is silent. And it is silent also until He was baptized by John the Baptist, and began His public ministry about the age of 30. From that time on until He went back to the Father in heaven, we have abundant and detailed evidence of where the Lord went, what He said, and the works which He did. And so this isolated event when He was twelve years old takes on special significance because of the lack of evidence that there is about the first thirty years of His life. Plus the fact that we know a little of what He said, and this is all that we know from those first thirty years. Consequently students of the Scriptures have found great delight in seeking to understand the meaning of these words which have been recorded and preserved for us.

Some have used these words to accuse the Lord of sin, saying that He caused grief to Joseph and Mary. But I think that a close examination of our Lord's words will show that that is a false charge. And such a charge must be examined in the light that at the age of twelve our Lord would have been looked upon as a man. Alexander described it this way:

Remember, that to a Jewish boy, his reaching the age of twelve made an epoch, because he then became 'a son of the Law,' and took upon himself the religious responsibilities which he hitherto

devolved upon His parents (Vol. VI, p. 63).

This passage has probably most often been used in addressing children to point out that the Lord was subject to Joseph and Mary. Luke 2:51 tells us that after they found Him in the temple, "He went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject to them." But what the Lord did when He stayed in Jerusalem cannot be compared with anything another child of the same age would do, because of the fact that Jesus of Nazareth was Deity. We might have a problem here if the Lord had refused to go with them, but the circumstances show that there was no sin involved here. We will see that the sorrow of Mary and Joseph was due to their lack of understanding. And Luke's words, that "his mother kept all these sayings in her heart," shows that Mary knew that there was something deeper in what her Son had done than she had yet realized. Luke 2:19 indicates the same thing about Mary--that she was taking everything in, and learning all that she could about her Son.

What the Lord said to Joseph and Mary was in the form of two questions.

I. THE FIRST QUESTION: "How is it that ye sought me?"

Verse 46 tells us that Joseph and Mary had been looking for Jesus for "three days." His question did not mean, "Why did you come back looking for me?", but, "Why didn't you come to the Temple first?" A. T. Robertson (II, p. 34) said that the question expressed our Lord's "amazement that his parents should not know that there was only one possible place in Jerusalem for Him." It was not just that the Temple was where they had all been, but that apparently they had been exposed to enough truth about our Lord that there should have been no question about where they would find Him.

But don't we all have to confess how slow we are to comprehend the truth of God, spiritual truth? And after this don't we see several incidents in the lives of the Lord's apostles where they did not understand what He was saying to them, even though it seems that He was speaking in simple, clear language? There is a human side and a divine side to the comprehension of the Word of God. God makes His truth known to us as He sees fit. For example, when He was with them in the Upper Room, you will remember that He said to His disciples, "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now" (John 16:12). The word "bear" actually means *to pick something up, and take it away with you*. The Lord may expose us to certain truths, as He did with the disciples, but He measure out the truth to us when He sees our need and His time for bringing us into an under-

standing of His teaching. Mary did not learn all that she wanted to know at one time, and neither do we. And the more we go over the truth, the more we understand. But we are constantly being given new insights into truths that we have known in part in the past. One of the amazing part of the ways of the Lord has to do with the way He brings us into a greater knowledge of His Word.

Some of you have been under my ministry long enough to see that I have a clearer understanding of some truths now than I used to--and you have spoken to me about it. I have never seen any need to change from the basic doctrines I have learned in the past, but I still am conscious that there are many things I need to understand more fully.

Well, Mary was just like us in this. She was not Deity. She was not omniscient. She was a disciple, and remember that a disciple is a learner! But it was her responsibility to do as Luke said she was doing. "His mother kept all these sayings in her heart" (Luke 2:51). Verse 19 of this chapter says that Mar "kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart." This was her part, and this is our part. The Holy Spirit teaches us, but we need to be reading the Word, and meditating upon what we read, or upon the truth as we hear it.

Personally I am very, very fond of Mary the mother of our Lord. I don't believe for a moment that she was Deity, but I do think that she must have been one of the most wonderful of women who ever lived. Remember that the angel of the Lord told her that she was "highly favored" (Luke 1:28). But she learned the truth just like we do. And our Lord's question seems to indicate in a most gracious way that if she had fully comprehended the truth to which she had been exposed, she would have gone immediately to the Temple to find our Lord.

The Lord deals with all of us in a very personal way in most things, but especially when it comes to understanding the Word of God. So we need to stay awake as we read the Word, and as we read books about the Word, and as we hear the Word taught. The Lord is far more concerned that we know the Word than we are to know regardless of how intent we are. And it is our understanding of the Word that has an influence of what we do, and what we are. So it is very important that we do what we are supposed to do, trusting the Lord to guide us by His Spirit into the truth of His Word.

But now let us look at:

II. THE SECOND QUESTION: “Wist ye not that I must be about my Father’s business?”

The word “business” is not in the Greek text. Some grammarians say that this is a Greek idiom which means “my Father’s house.” That seems like a likely translation in view of what we have just been saying about the first question. But the word that is used in the Greek is a pronoun, and can bear the translation, *things*. So, although the translators of the NASB use the word “house” (in italics--to show it is not in the original), yet in the margin they say, “affairs” or lit. *in the things of My Father.*”

Cf. 2 Chron. 29:15 mg. Cambridge Bible.

So I don’t think that “business” is a bad translation. It shows that our Lord at the age of twelve was conscious of the fact that He was the Son of the Father, and that He had come to the earth on a mission. He had come, as He said later, not to do His own will, but to do the will of the Father Who had sent Him. Cf. John 6:38.

The expression that the Lord used here is similar to what Paul said in 1 Cor. 2:11,

For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God.

“The things of God” -- This is what our Lord at 12 was concerned about. It can refer to the Word of God, or to the will of God. And it is in this connection that our Lord used the word we are paying attention to in this series, the word “must.” This was His appointment from God. This was God’s will for His Son. He came to earth to be concerned about His Father’s business, the work which the Father had given Him to do. And the word “must” indicated that it was inevitable that this would be the primary concern in our Lord’s life on earth. Nothing would, or could take precedence over this!

This passage is often used as a message for young people, to show them that early in life this can be our concern. We don’t need to wait until we get to college, or graduate, nor until we get married and have a family of our own--if that is God’s plan for us. For all of us who are saved, it is important that we look to the Lord as He opens up His plan for us. Isn’t this what Romans 12:1-2 encourages us to do?

In this passage twice Luke tells us that the Lord was growing. See verses 40 and 52. These are statements that we find difficult to deal with since

we know that our Lord was and is the eternal Son of the living God. But this was a part of His humanity. The Lord knew this, and He clearly felt that His mother should have known it too--that He was on a mission from heaven. "Wist ye not" means, "Did ye not know...?"

We all know that our Lord came to die for sinners. He came to seek and to save those who are lost. As the good Shepherd He would lay down His life for His sheep. But in the providence of God, His death was still a little over 20 years away. What was His involvement at the time in *the matters which concerned His Father*? *What was our Lord doing when His mother found Him in the Temple*? Look at Luke 2:46-47. He was listening to the doctors, the teachers, asking them questions, and astonishing them with His understanding and the answers that He was giving to their questions. We all know that they never had a student like our Lord Who was not only eager to learn, but evidently was by His answers teaching those who were teaching Him.

How could anything that the Lord was doing possibly place a greater emphasis upon the very thing that is encouraged all through the Scriptures: learning and teaching! The Bible itself, the very fact that it has been given to us, and has been preserved for us, shows that among the things that the Father is most concerned about is the teaching of the Word of God. He will never let His Word die. He will never let men destroy the Word of God. And even when His own people grow lax and careless about the knowledge of the Word, the Father always has ways of bringing His Word back from being neglected.

And yet verse 50 of our text indicates that even at that point Joseph and Mary did not understand what the Lord said to them.

Concl: This passage obviously teaches that children should be submissive and obedient to their parents. We could have no greater example of this than the example of our Lord. But it also shows us that with all that is going on today in churches and out of churches, nothing is more important, there is nothing that God is more concerned about, than the teaching of the truth of the Word of God.

The Lord commended the teachers of the Jews in His day about what they were teaching. But He condemned them because they failed to apply what they were teaching to their own lives. I find it very interesting that our Lord's first recorded words in Scripture, and the only thing we know that He said from the time that He was born until He entered upon His public

ministry, are these words. And that right in the midst of them is this word “must.” The Lord’s ministry, as the Gospels clearly show, was a ministry of teaching. His compulsion came not from the outside, but from within. No one spoke like He did. He was the greatest Teacher that the world has ever had, and I say this knowing that there have been some really great teachers. But none could, or ever will be able to surpass Him.

So what should we be doing--every single one of us who knows the Lord? We need to be doing what the Lord did as a twelve year old boy--growing in every way, but especially in the wisdom of God which we find in the Word.

Let us remember and abide by what Solomon wrote to his son. The word we find in Proverbs 2, verses 1 through 9:

- 1 My son, if thou wilt receive my words, and hide my commandments with thee;
- 2 So that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom, and apply thine heart to understanding;
- 3 Yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding;
- 4 If thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures;
- 5 Then shalt thou understand the fear of the LORD, and find the knowledge of God.
- 6 For the LORD giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding.
- 7 He layeth up sound wisdom for the righteous: he is a buckler to them that walk uprightly.
- 8 He keepeth the paths of judgment, and preserveth the way of his saints.
- 9 Then shalt thou understand righteousness, and judgment, and equity; yea, every good path.

Our ministries cannot be like our Lord’s, but the pattern is there. Let us pray that the Lord will give us a greater hunger to know His Word that we may live to please Him, and that we may share the precious truths of Scripture with those who need to know our Lord, and who have no idea of the blessing that they are missing.

JESUS CHRIST, THE PREACHER

Luke 4:40-44

Intro: In our evening services we are considering the passages in the NT where the word “must” appears. The Greek word is δεῖ. In the passages we will consider the word speaks of any “necessity established by the counsel and decree of God” (Thayer, p. 126). In particular they have something to do with the salvation which has been provided by the work of Christ for our salvation in His sufferings, death, resurrection, and ascension back to the Father in heaven. They speak of “that constraint which arises from divine appointment” (*Ibid.*).

We have considered two so far:

- 1) *The Trustworthiness of Scripture* from Matt. 26:54: “But how then shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?” These words were spoken by our Lord to Peter after Peter sought to defend the Lord with his sword.
- 2) *Christ and His Father’s Business* from Luke 2:49: “And he said unto them, How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father’s business?” The Lord spoke these words to Joseph and Mary when they came back to Jerusalem to find Him.

Tonight my text is Luke 4:40-44. Again we are concerned with the words of the Lord Jesus Christ, and if you have a red letter NT you can easily see what the verse is. It is verse 43. (Read.) I have given my message the title *Jesus Christ, the Preacher* this is what our Lord said that He was “sent” to do. And it was a divine appointment for Him. It was a ministry that He was certain to fulfill because of the decree of God. It was to be a part of His ministry.

I think it is important to see in all three of these incidents which we have considered so far, there were those who stood in the way of the Lord doing what He was supposed to do. In the first instance it was Peter. In the second it was Joseph and Mary. And in the third it was the people who were receptive to His message as they came to Him in the desert somewhere in the vicinity of Capernaum. But let me hasten to say that none of the people who sought to stand in the Lord’s way, did it knowing that they were opposing the will of God. And so in all three instances the use of our word “must” was a gentle, but a firm rebuke.

Before we consider our text in Luke 4:40-44, let me ask you to consider the context with me.

I. THE CONTEXT (Luke 4:16-39).

— Luke began the record of our Lord's ministry, following His temptation, in the synagogue in Nazareth. And it was there that He read to the people in the synagogue from Isaiah 61:1 and 2. This was a prophecy which indicated that His ministry was to be a preaching ministry. At first the people wondered at Him and spoke of His words as "gracious words." But then they began to reflect upon His parentage. And then when He preached to them, they became very angry and drove Him not only out of the synagogue, but out of the city, and they would gladly have killed Him.

The Lord then went from Nazareth to Capernaum, and in Capernaum the response of the people was totally different. They felt the power of His teaching as He stayed with them several weeks. He delivered a demon-possessed man. He also healed Simon Peter's mother-in-law of a fever after He left the synagogue and went to Peter's home.

This brings us to our text.

II. THE LORD'S HEALING MINISTRY (Luke 4:40-41).

— It seems that this began in Peter's home. The sick were healed, and more demon-possessed people were delivered. But He did not let the demons say Who He was.

III. THE NEXT MORNING (Luke 4:42-43).

Apparently this went on for a whole night, and then the Lord left and went out again into the desert. But the people were not about to let Him leave. Luke said that the people "stayed Him." They restrained Him. Whether or not they actually took hold of Him to keep Him from leaving, we can't say, but it is apparent that they used all of the persuasion that they could muster to get Him to stay with them.

— Then it was that the Lord used this very important little word "must." He indicated that His life was governed by a greater power than that of the will of the people. It must have been very delightful to the Lord to find such acceptance with the people after His experience in Nazareth. But His ministry was not primarily healing, nor was it to be confined to one place. The present ministry which He had was a ministry of proclaiming the truth. Capernaum had heard Him. But there were other places where His message had not been heard.

And so our text concludes by telling us about:

IV. HIS PREACHING “IN THE SYNAGOGUES OF GALILEE” (Luke 4:44).

Nazareth and Capernaum were both in Galilee. And from what follows in chapter 5 it would seem that the Lord did not get very far away from either of those first two cities. It was not that the Lord could not have helped more people in Capernaum, but He was thinking in terms of the will of God for His ministry as He was sent to gather in “the lost sheep of the house of Israel,” and they were not confined to one place.

There is another “must” that applies to this incident in the life of our Lord. We find it in John 9:4 where we read that the Lord said,

I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work.

The Lord said many times why He had been sent, but it is important to see from the Gospel records that our Lord never forgot that He had been sent, and why He had been sent, and that it was always His purpose, prompted from within His own heart, to do what the Father had sent Him to do.

Now let us think about:

V. JESUS CHRIST, THE PREACHER.

We know that the Lord was a Miracle Worker, and that He performed many more miracles than are recorded in all of the four Gospels put together. But His earthly ministry leading up to His arrest and death by crucifixion, was primarily a preaching ministry. This is what the Father had sent Him to do. People, it seems, were always more interested in His works of healing than in His preaching, although Mark did record for us that “the common people heard him gladly” (Mark 12:37). The physical needs of people must have been a pathetic sight to behold. Disease and demon-possession were everywhere. Even when the Lord had twelve disciples, and had given them the power to heal and even to raise the dead, they could not meet all of the needs. There certainly is no question but that it was the will of God for people to be healed. But all of the healing had one main purpose, and that is what the Apostle John made very clear in His Gospel. Cf. John 20:30-31:

30 And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book:

31 But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the

Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.

— It was that people would realize Who our Lord was, would listen to His message, and put their trust in Him for eternal life. And it is interesting to me to see that from the very beginning of our Lord's ministry there were pressures put upon Him by the people themselves to get Him to devote Himself to the ministry of healing. But our Lord knew what His primary work was. He said it, and His words are recorded in John 10:10 where we read that He said, "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly."

— We all should know from our reading of the Gospels that the people in our Lord's day were not hearing the Gospel. The Pharisees didn't know what the Gospel was. One of their main men, Nicodemus by name, came to the Lord by night to hear His message. We can see how He was attracted to the Lord by the Lord's works, but the Spirit of God was working in Nicodemus' heart, and he came to the Lord to learn a little theology. And so what did the Lord have to say to Him? He said, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3). And when Nicodemus did not understand that the Lord said to him, "Except a man be born of water and the Spirit, He cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (John 3:5).

The Jews were interested in a kingdom, for sure. But it was an earthly kingdom in which they would be set free from Rome. So the Lord could have had many listening ears if He had initiated a political move to set the people of Israel free. But as important as physical health is, and as important as political freedom is, the Lord refused to be turned away from the mission that the Father had given Him. He "must preach the kingdom of God to other cities: for therefore am I sent."

The Greek word that the Lord used for preaching is the word which is best translated, *preach the Gospel*. The NIV had rendered this verse in our text as it should be. Listen to the way Luke 4:43 is given in the NIV.

But he said, "I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns also, because that is why I was sent" (NIV).

— What is "the good news of the kingdom of God"? It is the message of salvation. It is the Gospel. It is the message of the forgiveness of sins, and the gift of eternal life. It was God's purpose for His Son that people in Israel be awakened to the realization that their greatest need was not physical health (as great as that was, and God did not ignore it), nor was it

political freedom (as important as that always is). Their greatest need was for salvation, and our Lord knew in His heart that nothing was to turn Him aside from the proclamation of that message. It was a constraint within His heart, and He was determined that He would do His Father's will.

Concl: There have always those who have shared that same burden, men whose hearts God has touched, men who have refused to be turned away from the preaching and teaching of the Word of God. Think of what Peter and John said when they were warned not to preach or teach in the Name of Jesus. Their response is given to us in Acts 4:19-20:

19 But Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye.

20 For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.

And who has not been challenged by Paul's words in 1 Cor. 9:16?

For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!

And in line with this is Paul's charge to Timothy in 2 Tim. 4:1-5:

1 I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom;

2 Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.

3 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears;

4 And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.

5 But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry.

In our Lord's earthly ministry prior to His death on the Cross, His ministry was preaching. He was Jesus Christ, the Preacher. No man that any in His generation had heard ever spoke like He did. The Gospel was to be heard, but it was not so that everyone could hear it. The Father sent His Son with a commission to preach the Gospel of the Kingdom of God. And He did! And He is the One Who has set the pattern for the ministry down to the present day. We, too, live in a day when people are not really interested in the Gospel with all of the changes that it makes in our lives.

They will not endure sound doctrine. But this does not relieve us from the mission we have, a mission that God has been pleased to write upon the hearts of many of His servants. We, like Paul, are constrained within our hearts by the Spirit of God Himself to proclaim this message of salvation, a message of eternal life. Let others devote their time to temporal things if they choose to do so, but let us be faithful to our calling, and refuse to be drawn away into other things that might be good, but are not the best! The best is to prepare people for heaven by telling them about salvation through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

OUR LORD'S APPOINTMENT WITH DEATH

Matthew 16:13-23

Intro: (Read the text.)

I would direct your attention to verse 21. (Read.) This seems to have been, as far as the printed Gospels are concerned, the first time that the Lord spoke specifically of His approaching death. As Alexander Maclaren pointed out, He had given several suggestions that this was what was ahead for Him. We have, for example, the words of our Lord that are recorded in John 2:19: "Destroy this temple, and In three days I will raise it up." The Apostle John went on to say that He was speaking, not of the Temple in Jerusalem, but of the temple of His body.

In the baptism of our Lord we have a suggestion of our Lord's death. When John the Baptist said that he needed to be baptized by the Lord, the Lord answered him by saying, "Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness." See Matt. 3:15.

And then we have the Lord's words recorded for us in Matt. 12:39-40:

39 But he answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas:

40 For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

We can add to these two one statement which the Lord made to Nicodemus, record in John 3:14: "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up." (This is another of our "must" verses.) Add to these words the statement made by our Lord along with the response of the people which is recorded in John 12:32-34:

32 And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.

33 This he said, signifying what death he should die.

34 The people answered him, We have heard out of the law that Christ abideth for ever: and how sayest thou, The Son of man must be lifted up? who is this Son of man? (John 12:32-34).

Here it is not recorded that the Lord said "must," but He apparently did because the people used that word in their question to Him.

Doubtless other examples could be cited. *But it seems that on the occa-*

sion of His visit with His disciples to Caesarea Philippi our Lord chose to be very specific about His approaching death. And the importance of this statement is indicated by the fact that Mark and Luke record the same words, and they both used the word “must.” See Mark 8:31-33 and Luke 9:21-22. The Lord did not say that He “would” suffer and die, nor did He say, “I shall.” But these Gospel writers said *must* because this was the word that the Lord used in telling them about His death.

Other statements followed. Cf. Matt. 17:22-23; 20:17-19; 26:1-2. It has been estimated that our Lord began being very specific about His death some six months before He actually died. But it was never far out of His mind. He had a unique appointment with death which He could not, nor would He, escape. His was not an ordinary death. Actually He is the one Person Who ever lived Who should not have died. He was not a sinner, but, nevertheless, He spoke of His death as a “must.”

What are we to learn from the use of this word “must” in connection with the suffering, death, resurrection, and ascension of our Lord?

The first reason has to be that

I. IT WAS FOR THE BENEFIT AND COMFORT OF THE APOSTLES THEMSELVES.

Let me support that point by reminding you of what the Lord said in His Upper Room Discourse when He spoke to His disciples about His departure from them. Listen to these words found in John 14:27-29:

27 Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.

28 Ye have heard how I said unto you, I go away, and come again unto you. If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father: for my Father is greater than I.

29 And now I have told you before it come to pass, that, when it is come to pass, ye might believe.

When the Lord began to speak specifically about His approaching death He had taken them up to Caesarea Philippi. This was completely out of the places of ministry where they had been serving the Lord. Our Lord's reason seems to have been, at least in part, so that He could have them by themselves, undistracted by people, because He wanted to minister to them. His conversation with them indicated that they were absolutely

clear and right in their understanding as to Who He was, but they were not at all clear in their understanding of the work that He had come to do. And so He took them where He could minister to them. The death of the Lord was extremely hard for them to take when it happened, and it was only by small degrees that they came to understand His mission in the world. Like many other devout Jews, they believed that He had come to set up His kingdom. How gracious the Lord has been to give us His Word, not that we know every detail of what is going to happen, but we can see the overall plan, and be comforted.

Paul was referring to this very thing when he wrote Rom. 15:4:

For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.

The Lord had given His disciples this message in the what we call the Upper Room Discourse,

18 If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you.

19 If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.

20 Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also.

21 But all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake, because they know not him that sent me (John 15:18-21).

And this is why Peter could write later these words found in 1 Pet. 4:12-13:

12 Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you:

13 But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy.

And the Apostle Paul along with Barnabas went back through Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch

Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God (Acts 14:22).

Tribulation can be very troubling however it comes to us, but it is doubly troublesome if it come unexpectedly.

So this was to prepare the apostles for things that were coming. The Lord wanted His disciples to know that they could trust His Word implicitly!

- But let me carry on with this idea of comfort. How would the word “must” comfort them in this context? This is an important point for all of us to understand.

II. “MUST” -- A WORD OF COMFORT.

Let me mention several ways in which it was a comfort.

A. It is a statement of the will of God.

- The Lord’s ministries of preaching and healing were very important ministries, and we must be careful not to detract from them. But they were not the main reasons that the Lord came. He came that He might save His people from their sins. And this required a perfect sacrifice which only He could make. He alone is without sin, and that fact did not change when He became a Man. He was the Son of God before He became a Man, and He continued to be the Son of God as a Man. He was both God and Man. Therefore, He alone Who was without sin could offer
- Himself as a sacrifice, a perfect sacrifice for sinners.

So the Lord wanted the disciples to know that when He was arrested, condemned, and crucified, this was all according to the sovereign and eternal plan of God. It was not that His enemies finally trapped Him, and He could not escape. God was in control of the whole thing, and what wicked men did, they did accord to “the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God” (Acts 2:23).

So we have in that word must an expression of the will of God, and the way in which God sovereignly, even working through evil men, was accomplishing His own purposes for His glory, and for the salvation of those whom the Father had given to Him.

But it was comforting in another way.

B. It showed our Lord’s full acceptance of the Father’s will.

- This was apparent throughout our Lord’s ministry, and this emphasis is especially strong in the Gospel of John. I am sure you will remember His words when He said,

For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me (John 6:38).

The Lord expressed this same truth in John 5:30, and we all remember how He prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane -- “Not my will, but thine be done.”

The Lord Jesus knew that this is why the Father sent Him, and, although the cost for Him was greater than any of us can understand, yet He never turned away for this crowning work which He had come to do. He accepted His role in our salvation, fully and joyfully.

But there was a third point to be seen in the fact that the Lord said with respect to His death, that it “must” take place.

C. The chosen ones of God could never be saved if He did not die.

The Apostle John did not report the Lord’s ministry to His apostles in Caesarea Philippi, but He reported a statement to which I have already referred which was equivalent to it. I am speaking of John 3:14-15:

14 And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up:

15 That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.

All of the promises of salvation in the OT pointed ahead to the one great sacrifice of the Lamb of God. The faith of OT saints rested in the promises of a Redeemer. They died in faith. And as far as those who lived when Christ came and in all of the years down to this present hour, and as long as time shall last, there is only one hope for salvation, and that is in the One Who was named Jesus because He would save His people from their sins. The faithfulness of God required that His Son would die. As I sought to bring out in my first message on this little word “must,” the trustworthiness of God and His Word rested on the death of our Lord Jesus Christ. No event ever took place in the history of the human race carried a great “must” upon it than the sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ. “Neither is there salvation in any other...” (Acts 4:12). If salvation is not to be found in Christ, it certainly can’t be found anywhere else! Cf. John 14:6.

But I must bring one more point to you. There are undoubtedly many others, but let me conclude with this.

D. The resurrection and ascension of Christ (which are a very important part of that “must”) assured us that Christ’s work was finished and accepted by the Father.

— If Jesus Christ had not completely put away the sins of those for whom He died, the elect of God, let me say it reverently but positively, *Jesus Christ would still be in the grave*. But He did put away our sins. He conquered death and the grave. He assured us of heaven, too. He was raised to life again because He had done everything which God required for our complete and eternal justification. Nothing needs to be added, and certainly nothing could be taken away.

Concl: Perhaps from all of this we can see why that little word “must” is so important. It is a word of comfort. It is a word of assurance. It teaches us the sovereignty of God in the work of His Son. It shows us that the Lord knowingly and according to His own will came to do the work that the Father had sent Him to do. He “must” die, and He did die, not to stay in the grave, but to come forth triumphantly thus bearing witness that the work of salvation was finished, given to us as a free gift, with nothing more required for the forgiveness of our sins.

— And let me repeat, He “must” die, be buried, raised again to life, and seated at the Father’s right hand because to Him and to Him alone belongs that wonderful word and title, Savior. “What can wash away my sins? Nothing but the blood of Jesus...

—

THE “AS” AND “EVEN SO” OF SALVATION

John 3:14-15

— **Intro:** These verses are taken from the ministry of our Lord to Nicodemus, the Pharisee. The Lord was explaining to Nicodemus the meaning of the new birth. Or, to state it another way, He was teaching Nicodemus the meaning of salvation. Nicodemus was convinced of the reality of the miracles which the Lord had been performing, and he had rightly surmised that the miracles were signs, signs that the Lord was “a teacher come from God.” And so it seems obvious that he wanted to hear what the Lord was teaching.

The Lord immediately introduced the subject of the new birth, and told Nicodemus that unless he was born again (Gk., *from above*) he could not expect to “see the kingdom of God.” In verse 5 the Lord made a similar statement, but spoke there of *entering* the kingdom of God. Obviously the meaning is very, very similar. And both statements were introduced by our Lord saying, “Verily, verily.” This word in its double form is found only in the Gospel of John, and it is used only by our Lord. It is a strong affirmation of the truthfulness of what the Lord taught.

— By *seeing* the kingdom of God, our Lord had reference to *understanding spiritual truth*. By *entering into* the kingdom of God, our Lord was speaking of actually being saved. We are not to think of these as being separate, although *seeing* might precede *entering* momentarily. We *see* first, and then *enter*, but I doubt if anyone ever really *sees* without going on to *enter*.

What the Lord was telling Nicodemus is the truth which the Apostle Paul expressed in 1 Cor. 2:14:

But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God:
for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them,
because they are spiritually discerned.

In order to understand spiritual truth, such as the truth of salvation, a person must have spiritual life, and this spiritual life is the result of the new birth. Although Nicodemus was a Jewish theologian, he clearly did not understand what the Lord was saying. It was “foolishness unto him,” and he indicated that by his questions in verse 4. (Read.)

— It is important for us to notice that Nicodemus’ inability to understand spiritual truth, did not keep our Lord from giving him the truth. It is the entrance of the Word of God that giveth light. Cf. Ps. 119:130. It is our

responsibility to give people the truth; the Lord is the One Who uses the truth, determining where and when and how it is blessed to those who hear to bring them “into” salvation.

— So we have here a religious man, actually, a religious leader, who did not understand what salvation was, and so we conclude that he was not saved.

Coming to our text in verses 14 and 15, we see how the Lord brought up a story which Nicodemus surely was well acquainted with, and from this the Lord was illustrating the Gospel. And so let us begin with

I. THE ILLUSTRATION OF SALVATION (Num. 21:4-9).

I feel sure that most of you know this story very well, but just in case some do not know it, or have forgotten the details, let me read it so we will all be together in knowing what our Lord was speaking about when He said, “And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness.”

(Read Num. 21:4-9.)

— The people of Israel were clearly in rebellion against the Lord, and against the leader whom the Lord had given to them. They were discouraged. They did not see any supply of food that was different from what they had been eating, and they hated that. They did not have any water, and neither did they have any faith.

So the Lord sent “fiery serpents” among them. “Fiery” means *poisonous*, but it also conveys the idea of a burning sensation when the serpents injected their poison into anyone. Many people died as a result of this judgment from God.

— The attitude of the people soon changed because it appeared that they would all die. This must have been a horrible experience for all of the people. So the people confessed to Moses that they had sinned against the Lord, and they asked Moses to pray for them that the Lord would take away the serpents.

— Moses prayed, and the Lord responded by telling Moses to make a serpent out of brass, put it on a pole high above the people, and the promise was that when a person was bitten, if they looked at the brazen serpent, they would be healed of the snake bite, and not die. Moses made the serpent, mounted it on a pole, and it was true that whoever looked at the serpent

when they were bitten, was healed and did not die. And apparently that was the end of the story.

Now we need to understand certain things about this story:

- 1) The remedy was God-given. Moses had performed miracles in Egypt, but he did not have the power to stop these serpents.
- 2) There was only *one* remedy. The camp of Israel was large enough to have been able to use hundreds of brass serpents mounted on poles. But that is not what the Lord told Moses to do. There were not different remedies for children, or for young people. There was only one remedy for men and women, adults, young people, and children.
- 3) All the people had to do when they were bitten was to look at that brazen serpent on the pole. No one was charged anything. It was not something that parents could do for their children, nor children for their parents. One friend could not do it for another friend. Every person who wanted to be healed had to look for himself, or herself. And that look was a look of faith. The Lord had told Moses that if they would look, they would live--and so looking was an expression of their faith in what the Lord had promised.

- That is what happened in Israel some fourteen or fifteen hundred years before Christ came to earth. Now I can't imagine that Nicodemus did not believe that story. I would assume that most Jews believed that story, and recognized the grace and mercy of God upon a people who deserved to die. It may even have been a part of the truth which Nicodemus had taught. The Jews were well acquainted with the books of Moses, and often even committed them to memory.

But now let us notice:

II. THE CONNECTION WHICH THE LORD MADE BETWEEN THAT BRASS SERPENT AND HIMSELF.

This is where we as the “as” and the “even so.” Our Lord's words indicated that there was a connection between what happened to that serpent, and what was going to happen to Him. That OT situation was so ordered by God that it became a type of Christ. The serpent represented Christ, and so our Lord was shedding light upon that OT incident in the life of Israel which Nicodemus had never understood.

What does the lifting up mean? Here is one point where I must differ from Calvin who said that the lifting up typified the preaching of the

Gospel. I don't believe Calvin was right in this, and my reason for seeing something different from preaching is in what the Lord said about His own lifting up. You find His words in John 12:32, and the explanation in verse 33. This is what these verses tell us:

— 32 And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.

33 This he said, signifying what death he should die (John 12:32-33).

So the lifting up was typical of the death of the Lord Jesus Christ. *But why was the Lord represented by a serpent?* The serpent always reminds us of the curse which was brought upon him, and which he by his temptation of Eve succeeded in bringing into this world. And is this not what Gal. 3:13 tells us in describing the death of our Lord?

13 Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree:

14 That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith (Gal. 3:13-14)..

— The children of Israel were under a curse because of their sins. But they were under a still greater curse, and we are too, because we are sinners before God. "The wages of sin is death," spiritual and eternal death, "but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 6:23).

The judgment that should have fallen upon us, fell upon Christ. And since the curse fell on Him, there is healing for us simply by looking in faith at the Son of God.

But let me carry some of the story in Num. 21 over into John 3 so that we will see the truth even in a better way. Let me call this:

III. CHRIST ON THE CROSS.

First,

A. The lifting up.

— We all know that Moses lifted up the brass serpent on the pole, but who did this to Christ? Who lifted Him up? Of whom was Moses a type in this situation?

Nicodemus could have seen the answer in the words of Isaiah, one of their prophets when he wrote,

All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all (Isa. 53:6).

The Apostle Paul wrote very similar words in Rom. 8:32:

He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?

It was God Who lifted up His Son. “God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the ministry of reconciliation” (2 Cor. 5:19). We don’t know how the message of the brass serpent got around the camp of Israel, but you can be sure that it must have spread like wild fire!

There was only one remedy from death in Num. 21, and there is only one remedy from spiritual death today, and that is through the Lord Jesus Christ.

And did you notice that Num. 21 does not mention how bad a person’s rebellion against God might have been, all he had to do was to look at the serpent, taking God at His Word, and the healing was instantaneous. That is the way it is with salvation.

Like it was in the days of Moses. The remedy for Nicodemus’ sins, and for our sins, was God-given. And there is only one way--through Christ. And the evidence that we believe God and are trusting in Christ alone for our salvation, is that we simply look in faith to Christ.

And this brings us to:

IV. OUR WORD “MUST.”

(Read John 3:14-15.) It was God’s appointment for His Son that He die. It was necessary, absolutely necessary, because there was, and is, no other way for anyone to be saved. It is not a living Christ Who saves us by His teaching, but a crucified, buried, and risen Christ, Who shed His blood for the remission of our sins.

Concl: This is a wonderful illustration of the Gospel, isn’t it? And if you want an illustration of *grace*, here it is. Nicodemus probably had taught salvation by works, but he was not satisfied with his own teaching,

or he never would have come to Christ. A religious man like Nicodemus could not work his way to heaven. He had to come the same way like another Pharisee, Saul of Tarsus, who was to learn after he came to Christ that he was the chief of sinners.

So, you see, the OT anticipated the coming of a Redeemer, One Who had no sin of His own, and so could qualify to die for all people throughout the whole world, generation after generation, whom the Father had given to Him. And just as a look brought healing then, so by looking in faith to Christ we are giving evidence that we have passed out of spiritual death into spiritual life by the work of God and the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Close with the illustration of how Spurgeon was saved, and the layman who used Isaiah 45:22:

Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else.

Make sure that you are looking to the right One. There is no other salvation except in Christ, and there is life for a look at the crucified One.

Bold shall I stand in thy great day;
For who aught to my charge shall lay?
Fully absolved from these I am
From sin and fear, from guilt and shame.

When from the dust of death I rise
To claim my mansion in the skies,
Ev'n then this shall be all my plea,
Jesus hath lived, hath died, for me.

O let the dead now hear thy voice;
Now bid thy banished ones rejoice;
Their beauty this, their glorious dress,
Jesus, thy blood and righteousness.

THE “MUST” OF DIVINE ELECTION

John 3:7

Intro: When the Apostle was preaching in Jerusalem on the first Day of Pentecost following the ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ, among other things he said this about the crucifixion of our Lord Jesus Christ: Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain (Acts 2:23).

This means that while men were certainly wicked in what they did to our Lord, and while they carried a great responsibility and guilt for what they did, the death of Jesus Christ was decreed by God. It was all the outworking of God’s plan. It *had* to take place. It was by “the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God.”

There could hardly be a better definition of the word “must” as it is used many times in the NT. We have seen what the Lord said to Nicodemus using the word “must”:

And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up (John 3:14).

The death of Jesus Christ was *a divine “must.”* It was as W. E. Vine said in his *Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, a “necessity arising from the determinate will and counsel of God.” And then he went on to say that the word “must” is used particularly concerning that which has to do with “the salvation of men through the death, resurrection and ascension of Christ.” It is used in various Greek forms, but it always has the same force. *It always has the force of something that was absolutely certain because it had been ordained by God.*

This evening I want to take four instances of the use of this word as it had to do with salvation, and I begin with the text I have announced, John 3:7. When our Lord spoke these words He was speaking to:

I. NICODEMUS (John 3:7).

There has been a lot of discussion as to why Nicodemus came to Jesus “by night.” Some say that he did not want his fellow-Jews, especially the Pharisees, to know that he had a special interest in the Lord. Others say that it was because it was more likely that he would be able to talk to the Lord alone if he came by night. What reason Nicodemus may have had, we cannot say for sure, but from the language that is used in Scripture about the salvation of sinners, we have an example here of what the Lord

was to state specifically later in John 6:37 and 44:

37 All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.

44 No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day.

This is a clear case of a man being drawn to Christ without knowing at the time what was happening to him. Nicodemus had become interested in the teaching of the Lord because of the miracles the Lord had performed, and the Lord knew both his interest and his need. More than that, we have in the statement of verse 7 the fact that the Lord knew that Nicodemus was a man chosen of God. There is a different in saying that “except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God,” or “enter into the kingdom of God,” as compared with saying, “Ye must be born again.” The Lord was not saying, “Ye must be born again if you would enter the kingdom of God,” which, of course, was true, but stated as it was in verse 7 the Lord was telling Nicodemus that *he* was by the decree of God one who was singled out, chosen, ordained for salvation. The Lord was pointing out to him, which would have been contrary to what Nicodemus as a Jew and a Pharisee understood, that something needed to be done to him, not that he needed to do something in order to be born *anew*, or *from above*.

The Lord’s ministry to Nicodemus was concluded without any statement made by the Apostle John as to whether or not Nicodemus was actually born from above at this time. Maybe he was, and maybe not. We just have two other times that Nicodemus is mentioned in the Gospels, and both of them are in the Gospel of John. This is John 3 is the first. The second is in John 7:45-53. Here we can see that he was siding with the Lord, coming to His defense. The last time that Nicodemus is mentioned is in John 19 where he came with Joseph of Arimathaea to take the body of Jesus for burial. We see that Joseph was “a disciple of Jesus,” and it seems safe to assume that at this point the same could be said of Nicodemus. Just when he was saved, we cannot say. But neither do students of the Word agree on the exact time when the Apostle Paul was saved. The time is not what is important; the fact that he was saved, and that Nicodemus was saved, is what we need to be concerned about.

The second example I want to take you to is:

II. THE WOMAN OF SAMARIA, AND THE SAMARITAN MEN (John 4:3-4).

When anyone traveled from Judea to Galilee, it was, of course, necessary to go through Samaria. I suppose a person could have gone around Samaria, but it is very significant that the Apostle John said that “he must needs go through Samaria.” This indicates far more than a geographical necessity. John’s use of the word “must” up to this point in his Gospel makes us pay attention to this expression.

We know that our Lord voluntarily laid aside *the use* of some of His attributes when He became a Man, but He did not lay aside His attributes. If He had done that, it would have meant that He was less than Deity. Here in John 4 I believe we have an instance where the Lord knew that there was particular people in Samaria who were ordained of God for salvation, and that He was to make contact with them *on this particular trip*.

It was providential that the disciples went on into the city to buy food, and that this woman came at that moment to draw water from Jacob’s well. The Lord surprised her by speaking to her for two reasons: He was a man, and she was a woman. But also because He was a Jew and she was a Samaritan. And she expressed her surprise to Him in the words we find in verse 9. (Read.)

The record of the conversation continued on down through verse 26. (Review it.) And then the disciples returned, and the woman, obviously moved by what she had heard, left her water pot and hurried back into the city, and told the men that they had to come to see the Man she had been talking to. And to them she expressed a conviction that was beginning to develop in her heart: “Is not this the Christ?” This shows that not only she but also they had been talking about the coming of the Messiah.

The men came out to hear the Lord, and then pled with Him to stay with them for a couple of days. When that time was over, they said to the woman the words we find in verse 42 (which is the end of the account).

Now we see why the Apostle John said at the beginning of the chapter that our Lord “must needs go through Samaria.” There were an elect people among the Samaritans, and it was not only ordained by God that they should be saved, but this was the particular time that God had determined to draw them to His Son.

But let us go on to a third example:

III. ZACCHAEUS (Luke 19:1-10).

We find our word in verse 5. (Read.)

— When we go from Nicodemus to the Samaritan woman and then to Zacchaeus we cover a wide scope of the society of that day. Nicodemus was a Pharisee, a ruler of the Jews, looked upon as a spiritual leader of the Jews, *but when he came to the Lord, even with all of his knowledge and all of his religious ways, he was not saved.*

The Samaritan woman, who had had five husbands, and who was then living with another man without being married, was anything but an example of morality. This may explain why she seemed to have been so well acquainted with the men of the city.

Zacchaeus, a publican, a tax collector, was looked upon with suspicion and hatred by his fellow-Jews, and was considered to be a traitor to his people, pursuing personal gain at their expense. It must have been shocking to the people to hear the Lord say the words we find in verse 5. (Read.) Here again is our word “must.”

— What the Lord and Zacchaeus talked about, we don’t know. It is very possible that the Lord spoke about laying up treasure in heaven, rather than upon earth, and what that meant. But what we do know is that after the Lord had concluded his time with Zacchaeus, what Zacchaeus did, and what the Lord said about him indicated that Zacchaeus had been saved. See verses 9 and 10. He was “a son of Abraham,” not just physically, but spiritually—an heir of the promise of salvation that had been given to Abraham.

It seems very unlikely that the disciples would have thought that any one of these three was chosen by God. But it is obvious that all three were, and in the case of the Samaritans we see the Gospel moving across racial borders, and it was the Lord Who took the Gospel to them.

Now let me take you to one final passage. It has to do with:

IV. “OTHER SHEEP” (John 10:14-16).

— The expression that we should be interested in is, “other sheep I have [present tense] which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold and one shepherd.” When

the Lord said, “this fold,” He was probably speaking of the Jews who had been saved under His ministry. The “other sheep” were the elect among the Gentiles. How thankful we should be for that expression “other sheep” because that is how we got in!

But I would point out to you that our Lord died, rose again, and went back to heaven without any significant ministry to Gentiles. But from Acts 10 on and right up to the present day Gentiles have been saved, and continue to be saved. But I want you to see who actually is doing the work of bringing in those other sheep. The Lord said, “Them also I must bring.”

The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are united in bringing those “other sheep” into the “one fold.” There is no difference between the Jews and the Gentiles as far as sin is concerned, and there is no difference either as far as salvation is concerned. There is only one Savior for both, and there is only one salvation. But God is bringing them. We don’t know who the elect are, but one distinguishing characteristic of sheep is that they hear the Lord’s voice. They are responsible to the Word of God. They will hear, and they will follow Him. How wonderful it is to be the Lord’s instruments He will use in bringing those “other sheep” which still must be brought and who must come.

Concl: All of the people I have been speaking about tonight were very unlikely candidates for heaven: a Pharisee, a Samaritan woman and the Samaritan men she knew, and finally a publican. But all of them were chosen by God before the foundation of the world. All of them were on the Lord’s “must” list. The Lord spoke to many who did not come. The very message He proclaimed about Himself and about salvation, caused people to hate Him. But then there were the sheep, not marked in any way, but those who heard the message of salvation and believed. And we are going to see them in heaven some day.

Among the people whom you and I know, do you suppose there are some sheep. God providentially puts us in contact with people, and there is always the possibility that it is because they are sheep. This is our greatest encouragement in the work of preaching the Gospel. God has an elect people, and they will come; they “must” come. They may be among the most unlikely people we know, but none of us would appear to be among those “other sheep.” But we were! So let us be faithful in giving people the Gospel. It is by the Gospel that people are “called” to Christ. It must have seemed like a nearly impossible mission for the apostles to go everywhere preaching the Gospel. This is what Paul had say to the

believers in the church at Thessalonica as he wrote back to them about their salvation:

13 But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth:

14 Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

15 Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle.

16 Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace,

17 Comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and work (2 Thess. 2:13-17).

THE “MUSTS” OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

1 Thess. 4:1; Heb. 11:6; 1 Pet. 1:6-7

Intro: The little word “must” has its application to our lives as Christians.

In this connection I would like to spend a few minutes each on three different verses in three different epistles. Actually the third verse is tied in with its context a little more than the first two, and so it includes the verse which follows.

The first verse is 1 Thess. 4:1, and it has to do with *the “must” of our walk*. The second verse is Heb. 11:6. It has to do with *the “must” of our faith*. The third is 1 Pet. 1:6, and it speaks of *the “must” of our faith tried*. In all of these verses, as you would assume, the Greek word *δεῖ* is found. And so, as with the other verses we have been considering, this speaks of a “moral obligation, denoting esp. that constraint which arises from divine appointment” (Thayer, p. 126).

This word tells us that the Christian life is not a life which we determine on our own that we are going to live; it is a life which God has determined that we shall live. Just as we have seen that the ministry of our Lord on earth was not a ministry which He had planned for Himself; it was a ministry which the Father had planned. The same is true of the ministry of the church. It is not what we think it ought to be; it is what the Lord has told us in the Scriptures that it should be. This is another way of saying that our lives are to be God-centered, not self-centered. All of the talk we hear these days about going to church so that you can “feel good,” is foreign to Scripture.

But there is another point that we need to keep in mind as we deal with these verses and that is that we are under a divine obligation to our loving and gracious God to do things His way. His way is the best way. His way is the way of blessing. His way is the way in which we can be a blessing to others, and perhaps be instrumental in the hands of the Lord to others to the Lord. There are also many, many professing Christians today who need to see that the way they have chosen to live is not God’s way, but their own. They need to see the fruit of the Word in our lives. So we are bound to do things God’s way so that we may glorify Him, but also because doing things His way is the way to minister to others, and in God’s way we find joy and peace for ourselves.

Now let us look at each of these passages in the time that we have. The first is:

I. THE “MUST” OF OUR WALK (1 Thess. 4:1).

This is what the verse says:

Furthermore then we beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God, so ye would abound more and more (1 Thess. 4:1).

The church at Thessalonica was a great joy to the Apostle Paul. The work of the Lord was prospering in that city (contrary to what was going on in Corinth and in the cities of Galatia when the Apostle Paul wrote to them). This verse indicates that Paul had taught them how God wanted them to live, but it also implies at least that they were doing what he had told them to do. He was concerned about their sanctification, as the last verse of chapter 3 indicates, as well as the third verse of chapter 4. And so Paul was writing to them to tell them again how they were to live.

The fact that Paul was not alone in what he had to say is indicated by his use of the word “we” instead of “I.” Plus he added, “and exhort you by the Lord Jesus.” This could mean two things—one or the other, or both:

- 1) That Paul had learned this from the teaching of Christ as contained in the Gospels, and/or
- 2) That he, Paul, had had a special revelation from the Lord to this effect.

I personally believe that it must have been the first—that Paul had learned this from the teachings of Christ recorded in the Gospels. It would have been enough for Paul to say “we,” meaning he and Silas and Timothy—the names attached to Paul’s in 1:1. But to add the name of the Lord Jesus would make it increasingly more authoritative. The Thessalonians would not have been inclined to argue with Paul, and certainly not with the Lord Jesus. So all argument (if there were any) ceased at this point. The way Paul stated this left no argument as to what they were to do.

When Paul spoke of their “walk,” he was using an expression which had its roots in the OT, with Enoch, and then with Noah, two men who “walked with God.” And so the word “walk” points to the way we live, as someone has said, *a step at a time*.

But what is to be our main concern in our “walk.” It is that we “please God.” Every other purpose in our lives must give way to this. But how could they know what was pleasing to God? Look at verse 2. (Read.) Again Paul mentioned the Lord, and referred to the “commandments”

which he had given them from the Lord Jesus. Therefore, if we want to know how to live so as to please God, there is no better place to start than with the teachings of the Lord Jesus. And if we are to start there, we must go to the Gospels.

How interesting it is to link what Paul said here about pleasing God with what he said in Romans 8:8, “So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.” Before we are saved there is nothing that we can do to please God, nor do we want to please God (unless we are trying to get something out of Him). But after we are saved the situation between God and us is altogether different. We not only want to please Him, but we “must” please Him.

And Paul practiced what he preached because we have the statement of his purpose in life in 2 Cor. 5:9,

Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him.

The NASB makes the meaning even clearer:

Therefore also we have as our ambition, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to Him (2 Cor. 5:9).

Our ambitions are not always godly ambitions, but to be ambitious to please God is the greatest goal that we can have in life.

Well, if Paul wanted them to please God, and they were already doing it, why mention it to them in his letter? Because he wanted them to “abound more and more.” What does this mean? It means that regardless of how intensely we may be striving by the grace of God to please God, we can always do better. In fact, we all will find places in our lives where we can improve as long as we are living here on earth.

And the word “must” (here translated “ought”) indicates that not only that the Lord will help us, but it also means that if we lose sight of this main purpose in life, the Lord will work in our hearts to bring us back to this basic objective.

But let us go on to the second verse.

II. THE “MUST” OF OUR FAITH (Heb. 11:6).

“Faith” to a true Christian means *trusting God*. Hebrews chapter 11 tells us that what pleased God in the lives of all of the saints which are mentioned in that chapter is that *they trusted God!* This is a vital part of

our *walk*. We can say with the Apostle Paul, “For we walk by faith, not by sight” (2 Cor. 5:7). But what does it mean to trust God?

Let me read Heb. 11:6 to you:

But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.

Trusting God means in the first place that we “believe that he is,” that is, that He is a living God Who sees us and Who knows our needs and is ready to help us in our needs. We come to a living God, and we cannot come in vain. God may not do things our way, but He will meet our needs. And the “must” means that we come to Him first, not just after we have exhausted every other possibility for help.

Many times the help we need is the ability to endure the circumstances in our lives. Read through Hebrews 11 and you will find that the circumstances were as varied as the people. The ways of God with us are to teach us to trust Him more and more. We cannot “please Him” if we come with doubts rather than in faith. And our faith will be strengthened as we dwell upon the character of God and upon the promises of God..
God is pleased when we come to Him in faith.

Now for the last verses.

III. THE “MUST” OF OUR FAITH TRIED (1 Pet. 1:5-6).

Let me read from verse 3 down to verse 7:

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,
which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto
a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,
4 To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that
fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you,
5 Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto
salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.
6 Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if
need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations:
7 That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than
of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found
unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ
(1 Pet. 1:3-7).

The Greek word for “must” is translated here, “if need be,” in verse 6.

The believers to whom Peter was writing had suffered greatly for their faith. He wanted them to know that what they had suffered was not by chance, nor because God would not help them, but it was because it was God's appointment for them. That is why he said, "if need be." The trial of their faith was not to destroy it, but to prove its genuineness, and to make it even stronger. This is undoubtedly why so many in the past were a testimony by their faith—because their faith was a tried faith. The Apostle Paul had this over and over again. But it made him stronger in his faith, not weaker.

And Paul said that such testing of our faith is "more precious than gold that perisheth." Our faith will be with us forever, but we can't take with us any "gold" that we might have. Abraham had times when his faith was weak, but through the testing the Lord put him through wait for the birth of the promised son, he was not "weak in faith," "but was strong in faith" (Rom. 4:19, 20). How strong was his faith? He was "fully persuaded that, what He had promised, He was able also to perform" (Rom. 4:21). So his weak faith was made strong through testing. This was the divine "must" in his life, and God did not fail him.

Concl: Thus we see these "musts" of Christian living. Let them be reminders to us that we do not have anything in our lives that is more important than day by day we seek to please God, and day after day we seek to please Him more in the present and future than we have in the past. Let us ask Him to search our hearts to show us where in our lives we are failing to please Him as we should.

And then let us remember that whatever else we might do, if we are failing to trust the Lord, nothing else we do can really be pleasing to Him.

And finally, let us expect to have our faith tested, not because God is seeking to destroy it (although sometimes it seems that way), but to show its genuineness and to make it even stronger.

All of these are God's appointments for us, and as we submit ourselves to Him, and trust Him to work for us and in us, then we will have a great cause for rejoicing when the Lord comes because Peter said in the last passage we considered that all of this is done that our faith "might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ." How thankful we will be then that we have learned at least a little about what it means to trust the Lord.

THE “MUST” OF THE LORD’S SERVANTS

1 Timothy 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-9

— **Intro:** This evening I want to take up with you the qualifications for elders and deacons which are found in two of Paul’s epistles. For elders we “must” go to 1 Tim. 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9. For the deacons we go to the continuing section in 1 Timothy 3, verses 8-13. The word “must” in that passage is in italics (if your edition of the NT uses italics to indicate that words in italics are not in the original text. But the word “likewise” in 1 Tim. 3:8 is the translator’s justification for bringing the word “must” from verse 1, and introducing it again in verse 8.

I. WHAT DOES THE WORD “MUST” TELL US ABOUT THESE QUALIFICATIONS?

Let me suggest three things.

A. First, it tells us (by definition of the word “must”) that these qualifications have been established by God Himself.

— Although I am certain that the Apostle Paul would concur, yet his use of this word indicates that he was writing for God. He was writing under the direction of the Holy Spirit. The Apostle Paul himself would fit into what he said about the OT Scriptures in the last two verses of chapter 3 in his second epistle to Timothy. (Read.) There might be other good attributes of men who would serve as elders and deacons, but those mentioned here give us God’s will for those who were to lead the church. And these apply to the church throughout the entire period that the church is on earth. The word “must” indicates that this is what God has decreed concerning the men who are to lead local churches.

B. Secondly, it means that there must not be any deviation from these standards.

— We might have some questions about some, for example, does the qualification, “the husband of one wife,” mean that an elder has to be married, or does it simply mean that an elder is not to have more than one wife—which was often the case among the Gentiles where Paul ministered? But to the best of our understanding of these qualifications we must act in obedience to the Word of God.

C. Thirdly, it means that such men who meet these qualifica-

tions can be found.

— If not, then the church should wait until there are men who qualify. To have men who measure up to these standards is the sign of a healthy work. This had to be one of the reasons that the Apostle Paul (and I am sure others also) would stay in a certain place to minister to the people who had been saved. Such qualifications are not what you would find among the unregenerate, nor even among babes in Christ. In fact, Paul said that elders were not to be novices. See 1 Tim. 3:6. The Greek word which Paul used for “a novice,” is the word from which we get our word neophyte. He was not to be a new convert, but one who had shown progress and growth as a Christian. Those in positions of leadership are liable to be tempted to be proud because of their position, and pride always leads to a fall. So there has to be some genuine evidence that a man has grown in grace if he is to be considered for this important position. Besides, how can a man be “apt to teach” unless he himself has been taught the Word of God and gives evidence by the way he lives that the Word is having a transforming effect upon his life.

Now let me ask another question, and try to answer it.

— **II. WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO FIND QUALIFIED MEN TO PUT IN THE POSITIONS OF ELDER OR DEACON?**

To answer this question, we need to go to another passage of Scripture, one written by the Apostle Peter. And I remind you that he, too, was writing under the direction of the Holy Spirit. The passage is 1 Peter 5:1-4, but especially verse 3,

Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock.

A. Elders are to be examples for the Lord's people to follow.

— “Ensamples” is an old English way of spelling *examples*. The Greek word here is the word from which we get our English word *type*. An elder is to be a model, a pattern, a type of what every Christian should be. Men in this position are not there to be bosses. Obviously there may arise instances where some kind of discipline might need to be exercised, but Peter said specifically that an elder is not *a lord*. An elder is not to dominate the Lord's people, nor to make them his subjects. We have one Lord, and we are all His people His servants.

Do you remember when the Lord Jesus warned His disciples about this very tendency that is in all of our hearts? James and John and their mother had come to the Lord to ask that they might sit at the Lord's right hand and His left hand when He came into His kingdom. The Lord detected the wrong spirit in what they wanted. It is certainly commendable if their desire was to be near to the Lord, but the Lord saw something else in what they were asking. And so this is the way that he responded:

24 And when the ten heard it, they were moved with indignation against the two brethren.

25 But Jesus called them unto him, and said, Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them.

26 But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister;

27 And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant:

28 Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many (Matt. 20:24-28).

It is not natural for any of us to be humble. It is natural for us to be proud. But we are so constituted that we can be proud of our humility. That kind of humility is pride masquerading. It is interesting to me that humility is not one of the characteristics that Paul mentioned here, nor in Titus 1. But it certainly is implied in all that he said. And it was indicated by Peter when he said in the verse we have just been considering that elders were not to be lords, but examples. And this calls for a continuing humble spirit.

Elders are to be teachers. And deacons also were to be men who hold "the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience" (1 Tim. 3:9). But the greatest emphasis in the qualifications that are listed has to do with *the practical effect that the Word of God has upon their lives*. Our mission in the church is not just to pass on information, even though that information is the truth of Scripture. We are to do that, and that cannot be overemphasized. But in addition to that we are to demonstrate through the lives we live, through what we are, the changes that God makes in the lives of those who walk in fellowship with Him.

Elders are to take the lead in this. Our teaching must be true to the Word of God, but our living must also be true to the Word of God.. The Apostle John spoke about *doing the Truth*. See 1 John 1:6. On one occasion the

Lord said, “And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?” (Luke 6:46). The proof that we know the Lord is to be seen in the way we live, in the kind of people we are, and not just in the claims that we make for ourselves.

So elders are to be able to teach the truth, and deacons are responsible to know the truth, but both must live the truth.

How different things would be in the church today if we had followed the Word of God in selecting our leaders. Men must not be chosen because of their prominence in business (although if other things are in place, prominence in business is no obstacle). Nor is popularity a qualification for leadership. Elders and deacons “must” be godly men, men growing in godliness, demonstrating by the lives they live that they have experienced the transforming grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

But now let me give a second answer to the question, Why is it important to find men to serve as elders and deacons who have the qualifications that are listed in Scripture?

A second answer is:

B. Because, since the elders and deacons are to be examples, these are the standards which Scripture sets for all of the people of God.

When you dear people read a passage like this, do you say this is not for me because Paul was talking about elders and deacons? Or do some of you men say, “I could never be an elder or a deacon because I could never measure up to those standards.”

Now I believe that the Lord intended that the leadership of the churches should be in the hands of godly men. This is not to put you ladies in a lesser place, but this is the plan of God. However, God does not have various standards of righteous living. We are all to strive to be holy in the same way. The reason we have examples is so we will know what we are supposed to be. And so elders and deacons are to take the lead in godly living, but it is God’s plan that all of the people of God will follow.

This same Biblical principle is true in the home, true of husbands and wives. We are not just to tell our children what they are to be; we are to show them by the way we live. And it follows both in the church, and in

our homes, that if we are walking with the Lord, others will follow us without being told that they should.

— We all have responsibilities in this connection. Let me speak to you young people for just a moment who are still living at home, especially those of you who are the older ones in the family. Do you know what a responsibility you have to be examples to your young brothers and sisters? What a blessing it will be to you some day to hear younger members in your family say that it was you who showed them by your life what it meant to be a Christian. We are all examples even when we do not realize that we are.

When the Lord washed the disciples' feet, demonstrating the greatest humility, do you remember what He said? Listen to His words:

For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you (John 13:15).

The Apostle Peter also said in his first epistle that our Lord was an Example to us in other ways. Listen to what Peter wrote:

21 For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps:

— 22 Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth:

23 Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously (1 Pet. 2:21-23)

The Apostle Paul even said that we are to learn from OT saints, sometimes what we are not to do. After referring to how the children of Israel rebelled against the Lord on their journey from Egypt to Canaan, Paul said this:

6 Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted.

7 Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play.

8 Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand.

9 Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents.

10 Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer.

— 1 Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come (1 Cor. 10:6-11).

Do you see how this idea of examples is emphasized throughout the Scriptures, either how we should live, or how we should not live?

Let me give one more example from this epistle we have been in tonight.

— I refer to what Paul told Timothy in 1 Tim. 4:12:

Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity.

Concl: So the idea of being an example runs all through the Word of God. It finds its strongest emphasis in the life of our Lord Jesus Christ. He is more than our Example, but He is our Example. And we can do no better than to follow Him. But from there we go to the patriarchs, men like Moses and Joshua, then the judges and the prophets, the kings of Israel and Judah. Some are positive examples; others are negative. But, as Dawson Trotman once said, “I never met a man who did not teach me something.”

It is hard for any of us to talk about being examples. I know every elder and every deacon here at Trinity would agree with me when I say that.

We are all so aware of our own mistakes, shortcomings, and even sins.

— But this should be a challenge to us all in the light of Scripture. We are examples whether we want to be or not. People are watching us. And we need to seek God’s grace every day to live to please Him so that our lives can serve as guidance to others who need what we have. Many, many times people have been awakened to the truth of the Gospel by seeing how the Lord has changed the life of someone who knows Him. And this in turn often opens doors for us to bear testimony to others.

—

GOD’S “MUST” FOR JOHN THE BAPTIST

John 3:30

Intro: The life and ministry of John the Baptist is one of the most interesting and most fascinating in Scripture, even though it is one of the shortest on record, and surely one of the shortest in time. Six months older than our Lord, his ministry was even shorter than that of the Lord Jesus. It is generally considered that our Lord’s ministry was about three years in length, but the ministry of John the Baptist was not as long as that. It has been estimated that it could have been as short as one year, but not more than a year and a half. And yet it probably is right to say that under the blessing of God, no one moved the nation of Israel as John the Baptist did—not even our Lord Jesus Christ! John the Baptist was a mighty instrument in the hand of the Lord.

On these Sunday nights we have been considering various passages where that little word “must” is used in the NT. As I have said over and over, it is a word which amounts to a decree from God. It is even shorter in Greek than it is in English, but it is a very powerful word. While it does not detract from anyone about whom it is used, yet it is a word which clearly indicates that the will and power of God were evident wherever it is used in the way it is most often found in the NT.

In connection with John the Baptist, the word was used by John the Baptist himself when he said, speaking of our Lord, “He must increase, but I *must* decrease” (John 3:30). As I think I have pointed out before, the second “must” was not used in the Greek text. And so if your translation uses italics to show words that have been added to make the meaning clearer, the second “must” is in italics. I believe that translators of the KJV were right in adding it, indicating that John the Baptist felt that same about his decreasing as he did about the Lord’s increasing. It was ordained of God that his ministry would decrease just as much as it was ordained of God that the Lord’s ministry would increase. As Hendriksen said in his commentary on the Gospel of John, the word “must” means that that which “must” be was according to God’s eternal plan. See p. 149.

It seems to me that this was really the personal keynote of the life and ministry of John the Baptist. It was not something that just applied to the end of his ministry, but it was a truth that guided and characterized the ministry of John the Baptist from beginning to end. John knew that he had come to prepare the way of the Lord. Therefore, when the Lord appeared,

He would step aside.

But just so we will know what we are talking about, let us consider the meaning of the words which John used of our Lord, and the word that he used of himself:

I. “HE MUST INCREASE, BUT I *MUST DECREASE*.”

A. The word “increase.”

This is the word which is commonly used in the NT for growth. It is the word used of John the Baptist himself as a child when Luke recorded the statement in Luke 1:80, “And the child grew.” This means that he was growing physically.

The Apostle Paul used this word in Eph. 4:15 when speaking of believers he said that we need to get beyond spiritual childhood, and “grow up into Him [Christ] in all things.”

But relating this to the ministry of our Lord, I doubt if it refers at all to the numerical growth of the Lord’s ministry. We don’t really know how to compare the ministry which John the Baptist had with the ministry that our Lord had. Numbers can be very misleading. No, it seems that what John had in mind was that our Lord’s ministry was to grow in prominence and in its significance. But this leads us to the second verb, the verb which applies to John the Baptist.

B. The word “decrease.”

The ministry of John the Baptist was very important. He was preparing the way for the Lord. But when the Lord appeared the importance and significance of John’s ministry would gradually grow less and less because he was to prepare the way of the Lord, not take the place of the Lord.

Personally I don’t think that John the Baptist was speaking about his own death. There is some evidence in the Gospels that John the Baptist’s ministry did continue after the Lord’s ministry began. At least two of his disciples became disciples of our Lord. And it must have been after the Lord’s ministry began that John the Baptist was cast into prison because he rebuked Herod for marrying Herodias, his brother Philip’s wife. But in those days John the Baptist was not the influence in Israel that he had been

before the Lord began His ministry. In fact, most of you will remember how disillusioned John the Baptist became, probably due to his imprisonment, and he sent his disciples to the Lord to ask the Lord a question that would seem strange coming from someone who had the ministry which John the Baptist had had. Matthew recorded it this way:

2 Now when John had heard in the prison the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples,

3 And said unto him, Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another? (Matt. 11:2-3).

It shows that even a very godly man can have his times when his faith is weak, and when his soul is tried by the circumstances he finds himself in.

Anyway, this was the strong impression under which John the Baptist served the Lord during those wonderful days of ministry in Israel. Israel had not had a prophet for approximately, and suddenly John the Baptist moved on the scene with a ministry which previously had been unsurpassed.

In a very real sense John the Baptist is an example for all who serve the Lord in any capacity. He is an example, actually, for all of the people of God in every generation. It is not my place, nor yours, to call attention to ourselves. We are to point people to Christ. We are to declare His glory, and not to seek to attract people to ourselves. John's message was not only, "Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt. 3:2), but, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). It is very clear in Scripture that John the Baptist spent his entire ministry exalting the Lord, but not exalting himself.

Let me give you some Scriptural evidence to support that statement.

II. JOHN THE BAPTIST EXALTED THE LORD.

I have already given you his message in John 1:29. In that same first chapter of John we have the others that I would like to give you.

A. John 1:19-23.

The ministry of John had attracted much attention. Remember, as I mentioned earlier, there had been no prophet in Israel for the past four hundred years, plus or minus a few years. Then suddenly this young prophet appeared, and the people left the cities to go out into the desert to hear him. Many were being saved, and were baptized confessing their

sins. And so the authorities began to wonder about this young, unknown, but obviously powerful preacher. And so a delegation of priests and Levites were sent by the Pharisees to find out who this young man was who was having such a great influence on the people. And we have the record of their questions and his answers in John 1:19-23. (Read.)

They knew what they were thinking, and so his first answer to the question, “Who art thou?”, was “I am not the Christ,” the Messiah. Was he then Elijah. His answer: “I am not.” Was He the prophet who would come? They were evidently referring to Deut 18:15 where Moses said to the people of Israel,:

The LORD thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken;

John’s answer to that question was, “NO!”

They were beginning to run out of patience, and also out of questions, and so we see what they said next in verse 22. That last question was very revealing of the character of John the Baptist: “What sayest thou of thyself?”

His answer: Verse 23. (Read.) He did not use his name, John. He did not say who his father was. Nor did he mention the miraculous circumstances under which he was born. Nor did he tell them that he was related to the Messiah. Instead, he quoted Isa. 40:3. (Read.) Here we see why he used the word “must” when he said what he did in John 3:30. It was according to the sovereign will of God that he come, and that he came, not to make a name for himself, but to be only “a voice”!

Let me read to you what F. B. Meyer had to say about John the Baptist at this point:

This humility is as rare as it is fascinating (italics mine).

We are all so apt to use our relationship to Christ as a means of enhancing our own importance, and attracting attention. Though we formally ascribe the supremacy to our Lord, we are elated when our name is on every lip, and our work in every thought, even though we should never have been heard of had it not been for Him. But there was nothing of this in John. He had the lowest possible conception of himself. Whilst all men mused in their hearts whether he were the Christ, He was ever heralding the Coming One. As they magnified the worth of his baptism, he declared that it was inferior to the Messiah’s, as water is to fire in

cleansing properties. When they trembled before his searching words, he spoke of the great Husbandman, Who, fan in hand, was about thoroughly to purge His floor. The motto of his inner life seems to have been, "I must decrease." Repeatedly he avowed himself unfit even to loose the sandal-thong of Him Whose herald he was (*The Life and Light of Men*, pp. 42-43).

And this leads me to the second passage I want you to notice. It also is in John 1.

B. John 1:26-27.

Mark stated it this way. This is what he said that John the Baptist declared This is what John said: "There cometh one mightier than I after me, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose" (Mark 1:7).

John the Baptist said that the Lord was mightier than he was, and that he was nor worthy to remove the sandals from the Lord's feet, and wash them. In other words, he felt himself even unworthy to do the works of a household servant if the Lord were to need His feet washed. How many of us truly feel that way about our Lord Jesus Christ? When the disciples were with the Lord in the Upper Room, evidently none of them felt that he was going to wash the feet of those present even though the Lord Jesus was there. How amazing are these words of John the Baptist! He was always *decreasing* himself that he might *increase* his Lord.

The third passage I want you to see is:

C. John 1:29-34. (Read.)

Notice how John learned who the Messiah was. See verse 30.

He spoke of the Lord Jesus as "a man...preferred before me: for He was before me." The word preferred is a common Greek verb which can be translated, *became*. In His humanity our Lord was infinitely greater than John the Baptist even though John the Baptist was one of the godliest men who ever lived. "He was before me" means that He Who always existed was the "chiefest" of all, better than all, and John the Baptist refused to compare Himself with the Lord. Why? Because, as he said in verse 34, "I saw and bare record that this is the Son of God." While others were debating whether or not the Lord was the Son of God, and others were

denying it, and wanting to kill our Lord, there was that first conviction in the heart of John the Baptist that the Lord Jesus Christ was truly the Son of God.

— Finally, let me say just a word about:

D. John 1:35-37.

John the Baptist sought to “increase” the Lord even though it cost him two of his best disciples: Andrew was one, and the other was probably the Apostle John. But John the Baptist could even rejoice at this because his aim in life was to “increase” the Lord.

In chapter 3 we see that some of John’s disciples became concerned because at that time more people were going to the Lord to be baptized by His disciples than were coming to John. See John 3:26 and 4:1. And this made John’s disciples jealous for their teacher.

It is never easy for a pastor, nor for his people, to see those who had been with them, go to someone else. And John the Baptist would have felt the same way IF it has not been for the fact that they were going to the Lord Jesus, John the Baptist would have felt the same. And John 3:27-29 tells us why John the Baptist could even rejoice at this. (Read.)

And this is what led up to our text for today: “He must increase, but I *must* decrease.”

John Calvin gave an excellent word on this verse. He had been commenting on verse 29 and notice that John the Baptist said, “This my joy therefore is fulfilled. And the Calvin said,

— John the Baptist proceeds farther; for, having formerly been raised by the Lord to the highest dignity, he shows that this was only for a time, but now that *the Sun of Righteousness* (Mal. iv. 2) has arisen, he must give way; and, therefore, he not only scatters and drives away the empty fumes of honour which had been rashly and ignorantly heaped upon him by men, but also is exceedingly careful that the true and lawful honour which the Lord had bestowed on him may not obscure the glory of Christ. Accordingly, he tells us that the reason why he had been hitherto placed in so lofty a station, until Christ came, to whom he must surrender his office. In the meantime, he declares that he will most willingly endure to be reduced to nothing, provided that Christ occupy and

fill the whole world with his rays; and this zeal of John all pastors of the Church ought to imitate by stooping with the head and shoulders to elevate Christ (Vol. XVII, pp. 135-136).

— **Concl:** Let me call your attention to the way John the Baptist made the statement we have been considering today. He is not say, “I must decrease, but He must increase.” He said, “**He** must increase, but **I** *must* decrease. There is a difference between these two statements. We don’t start with ourselves if we want this to be true in our lives, *but we start with Him!* It is only as our knowledge of the Lord increases, and as our love for Him increases, that we will even think of “decreasing” ourselves. Pride is such a strong part of our character because of sin, that we are very hesitant about moving over for someone else, even for the Lord.

Let me illustrate what I am saying by reminding you of the call of Isaiah. You will remember that his response to the vision that he had of the Lord was this: “Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips.” But if you had asked him how he discovered his uncleanness and the uncleanness of the people, he would have replied, as he did, “For mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts” (Isa. 6:5).

— Which came first, Isaiah’s vision of the Lord, or his cry of distress? It was the vision of the Lord. It was when Isaiah saw the glory of the Lord that he saw how unfit he was, and his people were, for the presence of the Lord.

John the Baptist knew that he was the forerunner of the Messiah. But it was as he got acquainted with the Lord that he realized more deeply than ever that with the Lord’s coming, his prominence must grow less and less. John the Baptist’s statement, “He must increase, but I *must* decrease,” shows his completion devotion to the Lord.

It was the same with the Apostle Paul. The important thing for him was the glory of Christ. It was so important to him that it made no difference to him how people might treat and oppose him, he could and did declare:

20 According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death.

— 21 For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain (Phil. 1:20 - 21).

But let us all make the application to our own lives. How determined are we that Christ shall be magnified in us, or, to put it as John the Baptist put it, that Christ would “increase,” and we “decrease.” John knew that it was God’s will for him. He knew that God had ordained this for him. But we need to know that it is the same for us. How carefully we would live each day if we were really seeking to exalt the Lord with our lives! The Apostle Paul said, “Christ liveth in me.” That was not just a declaration of his theology, but a testimony to the reality of his fellowship with the Lord. John the Baptist wanted Christ to increase. The Apostle Paul wanted Christ to be magnified. The words were different, but the message is the same. This is the message for us that we have in Rom. 12:1-2 and 1 Cor. 6:19-20.

The way John the Baptist lived is the way the Apostle Paul lived. And there have been countless other believers throughout history who have lived the same way. But what we need to realize is that they, in addition to living for the Lord themselves, were examples to us of the way we need to live. And it calls for at least three things:

- 1) A conviction that this is the way the Lord has ordained for us. John the Baptist’s “must” is a “must” for us, too.
- 2) Humility of heart. It meant this for the Lord Jesus according to Phil. 2: 5-8, and it must mean the same for us.
- 3) Real devotion to our Lord Jesus Christ. The only way you and I will live for Him is by loving Him as we should.

Let us ask the Lord to make this our desire, and then to make it for us the reality that it was to John the Baptist.

WORSHIP

(Notes to be used in connection with my message on John 4:19-26.)

There is a well-known statement, at least among pastors and teachers, made years ago by E. M. Bounds in his little book which has had at least two names that I know of, *Power Through Prayer*, or *Preacher and Prayer*. The statement is this:

Preaching is not the performance of an hour. It is the outflow of a life.

Mr. Bounds, who was himself a pastor in the Methodist Episcopal Church, was born in northeastern Missouri on August 15, 1835, and he died in 1913. He arose every day for years at 4 a.m. to spend the first three hours of the day in prayer. He was not exactly a Calvinist, but his statements seem to swing back and forth from Calvinism to Arminianism. I have read *Power Through Prayer* seven times that I have recorded, and probably a few times more that I did not record. A few years ago someone, and I still don't know who it was, gave me a full set of Mr. Bounds books, eight in number, and I have read about half of them with great blessing to my soul.

I refer to him tonight because of his statement on prayer which every pastor knows is true. "Preaching is not the performance of an hour. It is the outflow of a life."

After saying that, he went on to say this:

It takes twenty years to make a sermon, because it takes twenty years to make the man. The true sermon is a thing of life. The sermon grows because the man grows. The sermon is forceful because the man is forceful. The sermon is holy because the man is holy. The sermon is full of unction because the man is full of unction.

And just a few lines later he said, "Everything depends upon the spiritual character of the preacher." Another of his classic statements was, "The man makes the preacher. God must make the man."

I bring this to you tonight because of its bearing upon *worship*. We are inclined to think of worship as "the performance of an hour," that is, the times when we come to church, or the times when we read and pray by ourselves at home, or when we read our Bibles together as families. And those are, or can be, true times of worship. But what the Samaritan

WORSHIP (2)

woman needed to learn, and what our Lord's disciples needed to learn, and what we all need to learn is that, to borrow from Mr. Bounds, "Worship is not just the performance of an hour. Worship is the outflow of a life. True worship is a thing of life." That, I believe, is what the Lord was trying to get across to the woman of Samaria when He said,

23 But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him.

24 God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth (John 4:23-24).

The Samaritan woman was obviously thinking about what was the proper place of worship, and undoubtedly the forms of worship, and the instruments to be used in worship, plus those who were equipped to lead people in worship, but she, like many Jews, knew really nothing about what it meant to worship God.

THE “MUST” OF WORSHIP

John 4:19-26

Scripture Reading: John 4:1-26

Intro: Several weeks ago, in fact it was on the last Sunday night of July, I spoke to you about *The “Must” of Divine Election.* And on that night we looked at three passages of Scripture. The first had to do with Nicodemus in John 3 to whom the Lord said, “Ye must be born again” (John 3:7). The second had to do with our Lord’s ministry in Samaria, recorded for us in John 4, and concerning which the Apostle John said, “And He,” speaking of our Lord, “must needs go through Samaria” (John 4:4). For the third passage we turned to the Gospel according to Luke, chapter 19, the first ten verses. There we have the story of Zacchaeus, a despised publican, to whom the Lord said, “Zacchaeus, make haste, and come down; for to day I must abide at thy house” (Luke 19:5).

In all three cases we see that the Lord was acting according to the decreed will of God because it was God’s purpose to save Nicodemus, to save the Samaritan woman and many of the Samaritan people, and that it was God’s will for Zacchaeus to be saved. All had been chosen by God before the foundation of the world to be saved. Why did Nicodemus come to the Lord? Because He was being drawn to the Lord. Why “must” the Lord go through Samaria? Because there were people there, despised by the Jews, but appointed for salvation by the God of the Jews. And why “must” the Lord go to the house of Zacchaeus? Because it was in the eternal plan of God that Zacchaeus would be saved. I hope all of you understand that use of the little word “must,” and that you can rejoice in the certainty and effectiveness of the will of God. If you know the Lord Jesus as your Savior, although it may never have been printed in any book on earth, yet your name is in the book of life where the heading is, “These must be saved.”

Tonight I want to go again to the second passage we considered that night, in John 4, where we find the word “must” used a second time. Let me read from verse 19 down through verse 26, and you will see that our Lord used this very important word in verse 24. In fact, although the same is translated “ought,” the woman of Samaria used it in verse 20. But you follow in your Bibles as I read John 4:19-26. (Read.)

Let me begin our exposition of this passage by calling your attention to:

I. THE SAMARITAN WOMAN'S PERCEPTION OF OUR LORD (John 4:19).

At this point in her conversation with our Lord she perceived that our Lord was a prophet—and she was right! But what had brought her to this conclusion? It was the fact that He knew all about her marriages, and that at that time she was living with a man to whom she was not married. *But there may have been more to their conversation than just our Lord's knowledge of her five marriages.* And I take this from the statement which she made to the men of the city of Samaria when she said the words which are recorded in verse 29, “Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?”

There isn't a person on the face of the earth who can hide a single thing from the Lord. He not only knows all that we have done, but He knows all that we have said, and He even knows all that we have ever thought. We could not say that He is omniscient if this were not true.

The Lord had aroused her curiosity in the beginning because He had spoken to her, but now, at this point, she had taken a step ahead in her recognition of our Lord. By perceive she meant that she *understood* this. She had made this discovery.

Now this turned to:

II. THE DISCUSSION OF WORSHIP (John 4:20-26).

Some are inclined to think that she was trying to avoid talking about herself and her sins (because that is what the Lord was bringing out to her). But it would seem that she had been troubled about worship, probably in view of the fact that she had been convicted even before this about her sins. And she had sought the forgiveness of her sins by going through the motions of worship.

Many people do this. My own father was like this before he was saved. He knew that he was a sinner, and he thought that the way to get peace about his sins, and possibly earn God's forgiveness, was by going to church. I am sure that there are countless numbers of people who have done this in every generation. *They turn to religion, but not to the Lord. They do it sincerely, but they do it in ignorance.* When Paul was in Athens, you will remember that he saw an altar erected to an Unknown God. This probably meant that some people were not sure that the god, or

gods, they worshiped were the right ones, and so to be more sure, they erected an altar to a god they did not know.

This Samaritan woman seemed to be particularly concerned about:

A. The place of worship (John 4:20).

She had been taught as a Samaritan that the place to worship was “in this mountain”—which is probably a reference to Mount Gerizim. A Samaritan temple was there. But she had also heard that the Jews worshiped in Jerusalem because God had placed His Name there. And here she used the word “ought,” or *must*. And she probably used that word to indicate that the Jews were sure that Jerusalem was the place that God had decreed that His people should worship Him. She had turned these facts over and over in her mind, troubled as her conscience was about her own sin, and she wanted to be right. The “ye” in “ye say,” is emphatic. The certainty of the Jews that the Lord was to be worshiped in Jerusalem, bothered her. People who are under conviction about their sins know that they can’t afford to be wrong; they want to know the truth.

B. The Lord’s reassuring words (John 4:21-24).

The certainty of the Lord about His teaching is indicated by the first words of verse 21: “Woman, believe me.” He was here speaking as a Prophet of God, speaking the truth, and He wanted her to believe Him. His words indicated that the time had come when people no longer needed to be concerned about *the place of worship*. By our Lord’s death for sin, the shadows of the Law of Moses would be fulfilled, and the place of worship would no longer be a vital issue. It certainly had been from the time of the giving of the Law up until our Lord came to earth, but “the hour cometh,” our Lord said, when neither on the Samaritan mount, *nor at Jerusalem*, would people worship the Father.

How could He as a Prophet assure her that He was speaking the truth? In verse 22 our Lord was speaking *as a Jew*. And He frankly told her that those who were Samaritans did not know the true meaning of worship, but the Jews did because “salvation is of the Jews.” By this our Lord meant that while the Samaritans had the Pentateuch, the full revelation about salvation up to that time had been given to the Jews! And so it was because of God’s revelation to them in His Word that they knew that they were right.

But the Lord seemed to be making the point also that people were more concerned about where they were worshipping, instead of Whom they were worshipping!

— That continues to be true today among the masses of the people. They are concerned, if they are concerned at all, about *where* they will worship, the building, its ornaments, etc., and the ceremonies of worship which they religiously follow week after week until they can go through it all, saying the right words at the right time in the right posture, but God the Father is lost to them in it all! This was even true of the Jews in their worship at the time that our Lord came to the earth. They had their particular days, and the offerings that were to be brought on particular occasions, and their worship was directed by particular men, but God was not a living reality to them. They had lost sight of Him in their forms and ceremonies.

But the Lord did not stop with the words we have in verses 21 and 22. He went on to point out some very important truths in verses 23 and 24.

— Part of what He had to say about worship had always been important, but what He had just said about *the place of worship* marked a great change in what had been the case before He came. From the time of our Lord's sacrifice on until He comes true believers would not have to worry about where they were when it came to worship. They could worship the Lord anywhere! This was not to mean that the meeting of the church was unimportant where worship was concerned, but it did mean that every-place was a place where God's people can worship Him. We can worship Him here this morning, and we should. We go from here to our homes, and we can worship God in our homes, either together as a family, or individually as we meet alone with the Lord. We can worship the Lord as we go to bed at night, and we can worship the Lord as we get up in the morning. We can worship the Lord where we work. We can worship the Lord going to work. We can worship the Lord on vacation. We need to live lives of worship. *But the important point about worship is not where we are, but how we worship.* We **“must worship Him (the Father) in spirit and in truth.”** *This is the God-ordained character of true worship.*

— Before we seek to understand what it means to worship the Father “in spirit and in truth,” will you notice what our Lord said about the Father? He said, **“God is a Spirit:** and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth.” What does this have to do with true worship? And let me point out that while what the Lord said about the place of worship was new and a change, yet what He said about the nature of true worship

had always been true.

Perhaps you remember the message that Isaiah, the OT prophet, gave the people from the Lord concerning their worship in his day. You will find his words in Isa. 29:13 and following. This is what he said:

13 Wherefore the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men:

14 Therefore, behold, I will proceed to do a marvellous work among this people, even a marvellous work and a wonder: for the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid.

15 Woe unto them that seek deep to hide their counsel from the LORD, and their works are in the dark, and they say, Who seeth us? and who knoweth us? (Isa. 29:13-15).

During our Lord's ministry on earth He referred to this passage, and this is what He said,

7 Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying,

8 This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me.

9 But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men (Matt. 15:7-9).

So, what was going on in Isaiah's day, was still going on in our Lord's day, and it continues on today! What was lacking? They were failing to recognize that God is a Spirit, and that He must be worshiped "in spirit and in truth."

"God is a Spirit," and so our worship must be spiritual. God does not have a body like we have. He is incorporeal, that is, bodyless. He is invisible and infinite in His being. Otherwise He could not be omnipresent. David was describing the spiritual nature of God's being in Psa. 139:7-12 where he had this to say:

7 Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence?

8 If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there.

9 If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea;

10 Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me.

11 If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me.

12 Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to thee (Psa. 139:7-12).

So how do we worship Him “in spirit and in truth”? William Hendriksen had this very valuable comment on this important phrase, and this is what he said:

The context should decide. Jesus has been emphasizing two things: a. worship which is worth the name is not hampered by *physical* considerations; e.g., whether one prays at this place or at that place (4:21); and b. such worship operates in the realm of truth: clear and definite knowledge of God derived from His special revelation [the Bible] (4:22). In such a setting, it would seem to us, worshiping *in spirit and truth* can only mean a. rendering such homage to God that the entire heart enters into the act, and b. doing this in full harmony with the truth of God as revealed in His Word. Such worship, therefore, will not only be spiritual instead of physical, inward instead of outward, but it will also be directed to the true God as set forth in Scripture and as displayed in the work of redemption (*New Testament Commentary, Exposition of the Gospel According to John*, p. 167).

One word needs to be added: Such worship is only possible by the Holy Spirit. Only He can enable us to be spiritually minded. Only He can give us the necessary humility of mind for such worship. Only He can teach us the Word so that we will understand how we are to come to God in worship. God has ordained that this is true worship, worship that comes from our hearts, and worship that is in accord with the Word of God. And as Dr. Hendriksen also said, the Lord’s “must” is verse 24 is put over against the woman’s *must* (“ought”) in verse 20.

Concl: The Lord concluded this part of there conversation with a special word of authority. The woman knew that when the Messiah came, “he will teach us all things.” How wonderful that will be when the Lord clears up all of our doctrinal differences, and makes clear things about His Word and things about His ways with us, which are not clear now. But to this our precious Lord said, “I that speak unto thee am he.” By this He meant, “I am the One Who can answer your questions, and you can trust completely in what I tell you.” How wonderful it is that we have the Word of God, and the Holy Spirit to be our Teacher.

Matthew Henry said on this point, “Christ did never make Himself known so expressly to any as He did here to this poor Samaritan, and to the blind man” in John 9:35-37. He asked the man who was born blind, “Dost thou believe on the Son of God?” And the man responded, “Who is he, Lord, that I might believe on him?” And the Lord said, “Thou hast both seen Him, and it is He that talketh with thee.” Then the man answered, “Lord, I believe.” And John the Apostle concluded by saying, “And he (the man who had received his sight) worshiped Him.”

Now it is wonderful to learn about our Lord’s contact with the Samaritan woman, and to see how God had already been working in her heart. *But what about us this morning? Are we worshiping the Lord day by day? Psalm 95 clearly indicates that true worship is one of our greatest safeguards against sin. But it is also that which glorifies God, and brings rich blessings to us. For the Father to be seeking those who will worship Him in spirit and in truth means that there never is an overabundance of true worshippers. Let us pray that we may be among that number, and that it may be our greatest joy to be at the feet of our Lord pouring out our hearts in worship to Him.*

THE DEATH OF CHRIST IN RETROSPECT

Luke 24:7, 26, 44, 46

Intro: This is a continuation of our series on the use of the word “must” in the NT. It is found in four verses in Luke 24: 7, 26 (where it is translated “ought” in the KJV), 44, and 46 (where it is translated “be-hoved” in the KJV). And since this chapter deals with Christ after His resurrection, we can call it, THE DEATH OF CHRIST IN RETROSPECT.

The first of these appears in the message which the angel gave to the women at the tomb when they came on the first day of the week to anoint the body of our Lord.

The second use of our word in this chapter is in what the Lord said to the disciples on the road to Emmaus.

The third and fourth times were spoken by the Lord when he met with His disciples as the two Emmaus disciples were telling about how the Lord had appeared to them.

We can see that the talk about the resurrection of Christ ranged from a feeling that it was nonsense coupled with unbelief on the part of the apostles (v. 11), to Peter’s wondering in amazement after he had been to the tomb (v. 12), to astonishment with the disciples on the road to Emmaus (v. 22), and finally, after the Lord suddenly appeared to the disciples, they were startled and frightened because they thought that they were seeing a ghost. If anyone was inclined to believe the report, it seems that it was the women.

However, they were all to learn that the death of the Lord was not the end of it all. In addition, they were to learn that the Lord had not been trapped and overcome by His enemies, but that all that had taken place with the Lord was under the sovereign control of God, and every detail was in fulfillment of the Word of God. The Apostle Peter was expressing the conviction of all of the apostles on the Day of Pentecost when he had this to say to the Jews who had gathered in Jerusalem. The account is in Acts 2:22-28:

22 Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know:

23 Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain:

24 Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it.

25 For David speaketh concerning him, I foresaw the Lord always before my face, for he is on my right hand, that I should not be moved:

26 Therefore did my heart rejoice, and my tongue was glad; moreover also my flesh shall rest in hope:

27 Because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.

28 Thou hast made known to me the ways of life; thou shalt make me full of joy with thy countenance.

That little word “must” tells us very emphatically that the death of Jesus Christ was not a victory of the Jews over our Lord, nor was it a testimony to the power of Rome. It tells us that it was all according to the sovereign plan and will of God, and that God was, through the death of His Son, working out His purpose to redeem eternally all whom He had chosen and had given to His Son. I remind you that this word “must,” as it is used in these verses in Luke 24 and elsewhere in the NT, speaks of that which was made certain “by the counsel and decree of God” (Thayer, p. 126). There was no way that the death of our Lord could have been avoided, nor His burial, nor His resurrection. This is why the Lord came to the earth. Instead of being a victory for our Lord’s enemies, it was God’s victory over sin, over death and the grave, and over all of the forces of evil—human and demonic.

Now let us look at these four verses in their context and in the order in which Luke has given them to us.

I. THE ANGEL’S MESSAGE TO THE WOMEN (Luke 24:7).

Let me begin our reading with Luke 23:50, reading on into the first part of chapter 24, down to verse 12, so we can get the full picture of what was taking place. (Read.)

What Luke called “two men” were undoubtedly two angels who appeared as men, and angels appeared with the Lord when they came to Abraham’s tent in Gen. 18. Notice the emphasis that the angels made, especially the latter part of v. 6.

Luke's account is given in Luke 9:20-21, but I want to read to you from Matthew's account which we find in Matt. 16:21:

21 From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day.

22 Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee.

23 But he turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men (Matt. 16:21-23).

And there were other times that the Lord spoke to His disciples along this line, but this was the first. But it makes no difference how many times the Lord may have given them this teaching, once was enough! Matthew tells us that the women went running to the disciples to bring the good word to them. Matthew said that they did it "with fear and great joy" (Matt 28:8).

What are we to learn from this first appearance of our word in Luke 24? It seems to me that we are to learn how trustworthy, absolutely trustworthy, the teaching of our Lord was. I am not one to say that those words in your NT which may be printed in red are any more important, or truthful, than any of the other words given in our Bible. They are all true. Every word of Scripture was written under the direction of the Holy Spirit. We have in our Bible the infallible, authoritative Word of God! But, when we consider that our Lord was the eternal Son of God, then surely we must admit that He never taught anything that was not true.

So how are we to receive the words of the Lord Jesus? Not with unbelief, but with full confidence that what He said was true. If He said that He was going to Jerusalem to suffer many things at the hands of men, that He would be crucified and buried, and raised again on the third day, then that is what the apostles should have believed. But Peter even argued with the Lord about what He said!

One thing that you and I can do with our Bibles that you can't do with any other book, is to believe implicitly in every word! In reading other books we always have to be on our guard, or at least feel free to question whatever does not seem right to us. But not so with the Bible. And especially "not so" with the words of our Lord Jesus. We may not know how certain things can be, but always believe what you read that the Lord Jesus taught. That is the way that leads to understanding what He said.

But let us move on to the second passage.

II. OUR LORD'S WORD TO THE DISCIPLES ON THE ROAD TO EMMAUS (Luke 24:26).

(Read the story beginning at Luke 24:13 and going down to verse 27.)

Now what I have just said about the words of the Lord Jesus, our Lord Himself now extended to "the prophets" of the OT. I would take it that the Lord was speaking of all of the OT, not just what we would call *the prophetic books of the OT*, because of what the Lord went on to do according to verse 27.

But let me point out to you what the Lord did not do. He did not hold out His hands so that they could see the print of the nails in His hands, nor point to the nail scars in His feet. He did that later, but not here. What He did here was to take them to the Scriptures. And He said, "Ought not (must not) Christ (the Messiah) to have suffered these things, and to enter into His glory?"

The NIV translates it this way: "Did not Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?" The NASB renders it, "Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?"

You see, these men had just been carried along with the prevailing idea of the day that when the Messiah came, He would overthrow Rome, and set up His kingdom on earth. But they were like a lot of us today; they had not read the Scriptures carefully.

My Hebrew teacher in Seminary was Dr. Charles Feinberg. I learned a lot from him in addition to what he taught me about Hebrew. One thing he said that I have never forgotten was this. I am not quoting him verbatim as he spoke to our class, but this is very close. He said, "When people come to me with questions about the Bible, most of the time their questions are answered when we just turn to the text of Scripture, and read it carefully."

Our Lord could have shown them His hands and His feet and His side, but He wanted to correct a problem that was very prevalent in those days, and it still is a common problem today. If people read their Bibles carefully they wouldn't believe some of the things they say they believe, but they would believe a lot of other things that they do not presently believe! This

is why meditation is so important. *Meditation makes you pay attention to every word.* When the Lord was being tempted by Satan, He rebuked Satan on this very point. The Devil tempted him to turn stones into bread. The Lord answered him by saying,

— It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God (Matt. 4:4).

When the Lord left the disciples in Emmaus, what was it that they said to each other?

And they said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures? (Luke 24:32).

You can be sure that the scriptures meant more to them after that experience than they ever had before. And that was much better than just seeing the nail prints in the body of our blessed Lord.

But let us move on to the last two times the Lord said “must” in this chapter.

III. THE LORD’S WORDS TO THE APOSTLES (Luke 24:44, 46).

(Begin reading with verse 33 and read down to verse 48.)

— When the two Emmaus disciples came to the eleven and told them that the Lord was risen, we are not told what was the reaction of the eleven, but their reaction when the Lord did appear would indicate that they were not yet convinced.

And even after the Lord showed them His hands and His feet, we are told in verse 41 that “they yet believed not for joy, and wondered.”

What did finally convince them? Read verses 44 and 45. He did with them exactly what He had done with the two Emmaus disciples. They were convinced when the Lord “opened...their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures” (v. 45). That which was not accomplished by the testimony of the two disciples from Emmaus, nor by the Lord showing them His hands and His feet, was finally done by the Scriptures of the OT.

— Wouldn’t it be wonderful if we had such confidence in the Scriptures?

There is great power in the Word. And once we realize this, it will forever change our attitude toward the Word. The Word of God is effective when all else falls short.

But now let us look at the last time this word is used, in verse 46 where it is translated, “behoved.” You will find it in the KJV because the KJV is translated from the Textus Receptus, but our word is not in all of the Greek MSS.

Here the Lord was thinking about how this message was to be spread not only among the Jews, but also among the nations of the earth. Christ did not just die to save Jews, but He died for Gentiles as well. And that message was to be spread by preaching. But how could men preach the Gospel who did not believe in the resurrection of Christ. Paul defined the Gospel at the beginning of 1 Corinthians 15 in this words:

1 Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand;

2 By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain.

3 For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures;

4 And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures;

5 And that he was seen... (1 Cor. 15:1-5a).

Do you see what Paul was emphasizing in that passage. It was not just that Christ died, was buried, was raised again, and then was seen. But it was all “according to the scriptures.” And that is how the Gospel is to be preached, using the Scriptures.

Let me show you that this is exactly what the apostle did. First note what Philip did with the Ethiopian eunuch. He found him reading Isa. 53:7-8. This is what Luke related in Acts 8:32-35:

32 The place of the scripture which he read was this, He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth:

33 In his humiliation his judgment was taken away: and who shall declare his generation? for his life is taken from the earth.

34 And the eunuch answered Philip, and said, I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other man?

35 Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus.

It was the scriptures which Philip used to lead the Ethiopian to Christ.

Let me give you another example from the ministry of the Apostle Paul.

We find it in Acts 17:1-3:

1 Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where was a synagogue of the Jews:

2 And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the scriptures.

3 Opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ.

There is our word again in verse 3, “must needs.”

But someone may say that this was his ministry to the Jews; we have to approach twentieth century in a different way. I respond by saying, “When did the ways of the Lord change? We are born again by the Word of God,” aren’t we? Then let us use the Word. The Lord sends it forth to accomplish His purposes. It never returns void to Him. It always accomplishes that which pleases Him, and prospers in the purpose He has with the people we are speaking to.

Concl: It is the Word of God that people need to hear. It is through the Word that sinners are convicted of their sins, and it is through the Word that sinners are born again. Not everybody is going to be saved. It is not God’s will to save everyone. If it were, everyone would be saved. He has His own that He will bring to Himself, but they are always drawn through the Word of God.

Christ had to die. That is why He came into this world. He did die, and was raised from the dead—all predicted in Scripture. Now let us spread this message of salvation like the early Christians did who, when they were scattered by persecution, “went every where preaching the Word” (Acts 8:4).

THE “MUST” OF THE GOSPEL

Acts 4:1-12

Intro: We continue tonight considering the passages in the NT where we find the word “must” used which indicate that which is decreed of God and certain to take place. Acts 4:12 is another of those verses.

The setting for the situation that had developed here in Acts 4, goes back to the beginning of Acts 3.

There was a man whom everyone who went to the temple was accustomed to see because his family or his friends, we don’t know which, carried him every day and placed him at the gate of the temple which was called, Beautiful. And he was left there to beg for money from those who came and went from the temple. This man had been lame from birth, had never walked, and Acts 4:22 tells us that he was over forty years of age! From a human point of view we know that if he had not walked in all of that time, he would never walk. He was not looking for healing; he was hopeful that each day people would take pity upon him and give him money. He was a helpless and hopeless beggar.

One day when Peter and John were going to the temple at the hour of prayer, the ninth hour, which was 3 o’clock in the afternoon. There were two other hours of prayer, one at the third hour of the day, or 9 a.m., and the other at the sixth hour, or 12 noon. Why the Holy Spirit led Luke, the writer of the book of Acts, to say that it was the ninth hour, we do not know. It certainly was to show the providence of God that all three men were there at the same time. Doubtless many people walked past the man day after day, and ignored him. But he saw Peter and John, and they saw him. And we all, I trust, remember Peter’s famous words which must have been very disappointing to the lame man at the beginning, but words which were to forever change his life. This is what Peter said,

Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk (Acts 3:6).

Then Peter took the man by his right hand, lifted him up, “and immediately,” not gradually, but “immediately his feet and his ankle bones received strength” (Acts 3:7). And then this man who had never walked, not only walked, but leaped, “praising God” (Acts 3:8).

All the people who were there saw what had happened, and they knew that he was the one they had seen there day after day, helplessly hoping that people would give him some money so he could buy food to live on.

Quickly a crowd gathered, and Peter had a very special opportunity to preach to the people in Solomon's porch, and to tell them about the One Who could heal them of a much greater problem which they all had, the problem of sin. Be sure to read his message which is found here in Acts 3, going from verse 12 to the end of the chapter, verse 26.

Verse 4 of chapter 4 tells us what the results were. Five thousand men were saved, and this probably means "men" not including women and children, which could have easily doubled that number.

Such a response was certain to attract the attention of the Jewish religious leaders—and it did! Verse 2 of chapter 4 tells us that they were "grieved" at the teaching and preaching of the apostles. And so they arrested Peter and John.

The next day Peter and John were brought before the high priest and all who were related to him and questioned as to the authority and the name which granted them that authority to do what they had done. And again Peter began with the miracle of physical healing, and went on to proclaim to those religious leaders the way of salvation. (Read again verses 7-12.)

Acts 3 and Acts 4 clearly teach us that the miracles of the Apostles were not an end in themselves. They were not called to a ministry of healing. But the healing of the body was to be used as a means of proclaiming to people that they had a greater need than any physical disease, and that was the need of salvation.

Now we come to our text, Acts 4:12, where we find the word "must" which is the subject of this series of messages.

Let me begin by calling your attention to:

I. THE WORD "SALVATION."

Early in his ministry in London, Charles Haddon Spurgeon preached on this text, and he gave his sermon the title, *The Way of Salvation*. As he began, he called attention to the word "salvation," and I want to read to you what he had to say. I believe it is an excellent explanation of the word "salvation." These were his words:

What a great word that word "salvation" is! It includes the cleansing of our conscience from all past guilt, the delivery of our soul from all those propensities to evil which now so strongly

predominate in us; it takes in, in fact, the undoing of all that Adam did. Salvation is the total restoration of man from his fallen estate; and yet it is something more than that, for God's salvation fixes our standing more secure than it was before we fell. It finds us broken in pieces by the sin of our first parent, defiled, stained, accursed: it first heals our wounds, it removes our diseases, it takes away our curse, it puts our feet upon the rock Christ Jesus, and having thus done, at last it lifts our heads far above all principalities and powers, to be crowned for ever with Jesus Christ, the King of heaven. Some people, when they use the word "salvation," understand nothing more by it than deliverance from hell and admittance to heaven. Now, that is not salvation; those two things are the *effects* of salvation. We are redeemed from hell because we are saved, and we enter heaven because we have been saved beforehand. Our everlasting state is the effect of salvation in this life. Salvation, it is true, includes all that, because salvation is the mother of it, and carrieth it within its bowels; but still it were wrong for us to image that that is all the meaning of the word. Salvation begins with us as wondering sheep; it follows us through all our mazy wanderings; it puts us on the shoulders of the shepherd; it carries us into the fold; it calls together the friends and neighbors; it rejoices over us; it preserves us in that fold through life; and then at last it brings us to the green pastures of heaven, beside the still waters of bliss, where we lie down for ever, in the presence of the Chief Shepherd, never more to be disturbed (Vol. 4, pp. 353, 354).

As I have said many times, "salvation" is *the big word of the Gospel* which includes all that God does for us and in us from our election in eternity past to our final conformity to the very likeness of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The preaching of the apostles all could be brought down to this one statement: There is such a work of God which is called *salvation*. It is a work which we all need, but which none of us deserves. Salvation includes our justification, our sanctification, and our final glorification.

People generally like to think that there is such a thing as salvation. But man has his own ideas about what it is and how it is obtained. The fact that the world is full of religions is a testimony to the fact that man believes in salvation. *But let us remember that man's definition of salvation means nothing. It is God's definition which counts. What is His defini-*

tion? We could define it from many passages of Scripture, but what do we learn from our text?

— Peter, speaking as an apostle of Jesus Christ, first approached it negatively. And so we learn:

II. WHAT SALVATION IS NOT.

Here I am referring to his words, “Neither is there salvation in any other.” This is a basic tenet of salvation. It is a unique characteristic of the Christian faith which was hated by the Jews in our Lord’s day, and it has always been hated by people throughout the world. You find it expressed in different ways. People will say, “If you Christians want to believe that for yourselves, that is OK with me. But don’t tell me that what I believe is wrong; don’t tell me that I have to believe what you believe in order to have salvation.”

— Peter, in his messages in Acts 2, and in Acts 3, and in Acts 4, had been telling people that Jesus Christ is the Savior, the only Savior. And now he plainly declares in our text, “Neither is there salvation in any other.” This is what people do not like. They want Jesus Christ to be one of many Saviors. But the kind of preaching that Peter was doing would never agree that there could be even two saviors. So this means that those who believe that Jesus Christ is the only Savior are right, and that anyone who believes in any other Savior—Mohammed, Buddha, or any other religious leader—is wrong!

Perhaps you have heard of the Bahai religion. Those who follow that group believe that we are all going to the same place; we are just going in different ways. *That is false teaching, and the person who follows that doctrine will never know what true salvation is.*

The Apostle Peter was standing on good ground because the Lord Jesus Christ Himself once said,

I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me (John 14:6).

With this statement Jesus Christ declared that anyone who tried to get to God except through Himself, would never make it!

— Or let me remind you of our Lord’s word which we find in John 10:7-9:
7 Then said Jesus unto them again, Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep.

8 All that ever came before me are thieves and robbers: but the sheep did not hear them.

9 I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.

What about John 3:36? These are the words of our Lord Jesus Christ:
He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.

What did Peter tell the Gentiles in the house of Cornelius when he came to tell them how to be saved? Listen to his words:

42 And he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he which was ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead.

43 To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins (Acts 10:42-43).

And so again we see how Peter stood by his teaching that there was only one Savior.

Listen to the words of the Apostle Paul writing to the Corinthian church:

10 According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon.

11 For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 3:10-11).

Paul's words to Timothy indicated that there is just one Savior:

5 For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus;

6 Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time (1 Tim. 2:5-6).

There are not even two mediators; just one. And He is "the man Christ Jesus."

One more passage, this time from the Apostle John:

11 And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.

12 He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life (1 John 5:11-12).

May it forever be written upon our hearts, and let us not compromise with this truth. The Promise Keepers do not hold to this truth. Those who are in support of Evangelicals and Catholics together, do not hold to this truth. Some may who are in these groups, but they admit others who would say that there are others besides Jesus Christ who have a part in salvation. There are many sincere people who want us to set aside our doctrinal differences, and get together! Get together for what? It is usually the case that the exclusive teaching about Jesus Christ being the only Savior, is the first doctrine that has to go. If you give that teaching up, you have nothing left.

So I hope it is firmly established in your mind and heart that there is not, nor can there be, but one Savior. And His Name is the Lord Jesus Christ.

The last part of our verse tells us:

III. HOW WE “MUST” BE SAVED.

What right do we have for being so dogmatic about this? Without any hesitation I say, “Because, as we have seen, this is what we are taught in the Word of God!”

You see, although I have read statements to you from Peter and from Paul and from the Apostle John, yet we believe that it was the Spirit of God Who taught them what Peter was expressing in this verse:

For there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.

If you want to be saved, you must believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. If you refuse to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, you will never be saved. God has declared in His Word that there is only One Who can save us. Why does it have to be the Lord Jesus Christ? For two reasons:

- 1) Because God has said so.
- 2) Because there is no other person who is capable of being our Savior.

The Apostle Paul stated in 2 Cor. 5:21 why Christ, and only Christ, could be our Savior. Let me read it to you as it appears in the NKJ version. It is no different from the old KJV, but the words are rearranged to make the meaning clearer. Listen to what Paul said:

For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him (2 Cor. 5:21 -- NKJ).

You see, it takes a sinless Savior to save guilty sinners. And no person in heaven and earth could qualify except the Son of God Who became a

Man. That is what 2 Cor. 5:21 tells us. Jesus Christ the Sinless One died on the Cross to save sinners from their sins. He knew no sin. He did no sin. He was without sin.

— **Concl:** You and I do not decide how we are going to be saved. We have forfeited our right to salvation by our sins. It is God Who had the right to say whether or not there would be salvation for sinners. In His grace, He determined that there would be, and He is the One Who has appointed His Son to be the Savior. So whether we like it or not, Jesus Christ is the Savior, the only Savior, and if you and I want to be saved, we “must” come to God through faith in Christ. There is no other way to God. There is no other way for us to be forgiven of our sins, no other way to be born again and to become new creatures except in Christ.

If you are not trusting in Christ now for your salvation, put your trust in Him tonight. Delay no longer. You do not have even two choices. It is Christ who will save you, or you will never be saved.

(Quote Acts 4:12 and John 14:6 in closing.)

—

—

THE “MUST” OF HOLY LIVING

2 Peter 3:1-13

— **Intro:** In Henry Lyte’s familiar hymn, Abide With Me, he gave us those well-known lines which are even more apparently true today than they were then. I am referring to the word which are the last part of the second stanza as it appears in our hymnal:

Change and decay in all around I see,

O Thou Who changes not, abide with me.

Things can “change” in one of two directions: they can get better, or they can get worse. But in this world we do not see “change” for the better, but the change is always accompanied by “decay.”

There are many ways in which we have things better than our fathers and grandfathers had. Life is much easier with all of the conveniences we have in our homes. We can get from place to place much faster than any generation before us. Great strides have been made the fight against diseases. Our whole standard of living is much higher than it was for those who went before us. And this is what is so deceiving to people. We are continually hearing forecasts of how much better things are going to be in the next century, and so people generally are blinded, and willfully so, of the direction in which this world is going. But we all have to admit, if we are going to be honest at all, that at the same time we have all of these advantages, morally things have never been worse—and they continue to *decay*. So the improvements are offset by the moral decline that is eating away at our society. It is not unusual to hear people who make no claim of being Christians, expressing alarm over the way things are going. The advantages we have, and which are continually increasing, seem to have anesthetized the minds of people today as to what is really going on.

— In the chapter from which I have taken my text for this service, we read of “scoffers” “in the last days.” A scoffer is one who scorns what you are trying to tell him. He shows both anger and disgust. And he not only ridicules what you say, but he ridicules you! People like to think that things are going to get better, that we might be in a temporary slump, but we will pull out of it. And so Christians who know what the Bible tells us about both the past and the future, are treated as those who stand in the way of improvement, and that has led to severe persecution in past days.

— What do people scorn about the Christian faith?

They scorn the idea that the Lord Jesus is coming again? They scorn any

idea of judgment. They reject the testimony of Scripture regarding the past, and point out that things continue to go on just as they have from the beginning. They don't want you to talk about God, and Peter said in 2 Pet. 3:5 that they are "willingly ignorant" of things that the Bible tells us about, such as what happened at the time of the flood early in human history. See 2 Pet. 3:5-6. That was the most devastating judgment ever to hit the world, but there have been many others, and we continue to have them, that are warnings of greater judgments to come. But people do not want to believe that the heavens and earth that exist today are faced with the same terrible prediction of judgment, involving not only the earth, but also the heavens!

Living in such a scorning, disdainful atmosphere, can easily take its toll on those of us who know the Lord. It does seem that people can sin in any way that they want to (although they do not call it *sin*), and they get away with it. And this encourages people to go ahead and do whatever they want to do.

What help has the Apostle Peter given to us almost 2,000 years later than he lived? We find our first answer in verse 8.

I. THE LORD IS NOT ON OUR TIME SCHEDULE (2 Pet. 3:8).

A thousand years was a long time in Peter's day, and it is still a long time today. It appears to be very long to us. Normally we would think that if judgments have not come, or if promises have not been fulfilled in 2,000 years, they aren't going to be fulfilled. People give up on promises and warnings in a lot less time than that!

We can't say that time is unimportant to the Lord, but we can say that the Lord is not on our schedule; *we are on His!* And even a delay in the return of the Lord such as we have now seen, does not mean that He is not coming. It simply means that He is working according to His schedule rather than ours.

The second point that Peter made regarding the delay in the Lord's return has to do with:

II. THE CHARACTER OF GOD (2 Pet. 3:9-10).

The scoffers, if they would have anything to say about God at all, would conclude that God is "slack."

This can mean a number of things. A slack person is always late, and so you can never depend upon anything that he says. And the scoffers would say this about God. It can mean that God isn't paying any attention to what is going on here on earth; that He has other things that are more important to Him. Or it can mean that God made a lot of promises to His people which He has either forgotten about, or which He never intended to keep, or which, for a variety of reasons He is unable to keep. To coin a word, they would say that God "over-promised" Himself. Christians are often ridiculed because they take the Bible seriously.

But when it comes to attacking the character of God, you find that the writers of Scripture come quickly to God's defense by declaring the truth as we find it in Scripture. And it is most surprising how Peter answers this. *He answers it with one of the doctrines of grace.*

Now the explanation that is generally given to this verse is that God doesn't want anyone to go to hell, to perish, and so He is waiting hoping that more and more people will be saved. But that is not what Peter was saying.

I ask you a question: TO WHOM DID THE APOSTLE PETER WRITE THIS EPISTLE? The only way to answer that question is by going back to the beginning to see to whom he addressed his letter. And you find your answer in the very first verse. It is "to them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ."

Who would you say they were?

Obviously they were believers. He was writing to the people of God!

So when Peter said in 2 Pet. 3:9 that the Lord is not slack, "but is long-suffering to us-ward," or toward us, "not willing that any" of us, implied, should perish, "but that all" of us (again) "should perish, but that all" of us "should come to repentance."

This means that the Lord is anything but "slack." It means that the reason that the Lord has not yet come is that the full company of the elect have not yet been saved. The Father has ordained that they shall be saved, *and they will be saved – all of them, all of the elect! And the Lord knows whom He has chosen, and He intends to bring everyone to Himself.*

But then as you go on to verse 10 the Apostle Peter states again the prediction of judgment which in the Lord's time will be fulfilled.

But do you see from this that the most important work that is going on in the world today is not what is going on in our high-tech labs, nor what is going on in the field of world politics, not the advances in medicine. We can be thankful for every improvement. *But Peter was telling us here that the most important work that is going on in the world today is the preaching of the Gospel!*

Nothing is late! Everything is on schedule. Let the scoffers scoff all they want to; God is at work, fulfilling His promises, and promises, whether for salvation or for judgment, or any other kind of a promise, God never breaks.

Now, after all of what I have said, I finally come to the text which has our word "must."

III. THE "MUST" FOR EVERY CHILD OF GOD TODAY (2 Pet. 3:11-13).

Unfortunately our word "must" is translated with another word, the word "ought." But personally I believe that the word "ought" actually weakens what Peter was saying. And so I would go back to the word "must." What Peter said here is not something that we should do if we feel so inclined, but it is what has been ordained by God for these last days in which we are living.

"Change and decay in all around I see," but there is one area where there continues to be the need for change, but not toward decay. In fact, it is just the opposite direction. "What manner of persons **must** ye to be," you and I, all of us who know the Lord, "in all holy conversation and godliness."

As moral standards go down and down, it would be easy for us to think that it doesn't make as much difference what we are, and what we do. But the Holy Spirit is here telling us through the Apostle Peter that as things get worse, it is even more important that we be a holy people. We need to be even more careful about sin, and about going along with the wickedness of our generation.

"All holy conversation." I hope that by now all of you know that when

you come to this word “conversation” in the KJV, the writer does not just have in mind the way we talk (although that is included), but it has to do with the way we *walk*—the way we live.

Thayer, in his Greek lexicon, gives four words which could be used here in place of “conversation.” They are “manner of life, conduct, behavior, deportment.” But the Bible word *walk* is another word that I would use. What Peter was saying was that holiness should touch every area of our being—the way we think, the way we talk, the places we go, the things we do; in short, all that we are! There is not a part of our lives which should not be included. We need to be “holy.”

Note how Peter began in his first epistle: Read 1 Peter 1:14-16.

You see, right up to the time of the Lord’s return, we are light and salt in this world. The greatest testimony we have is the testimony of a changed life! To be holy is to turn away from sin in every form, and to seek by God’s grace to be like God, and like our Lord Jesus Christ. By holy lives we show that just as God has chosen us, and called us, so He has set us apart from an evil world to be living witnesses of the message we proclaim.

The word “godliness” stresses the importance of a right relationship with God. It speaks of a person who has been attracted to God, who wants to know God, who wants to please God, and who wants to be like God. Paul stressed this with Timothy, referring to it ten times in 1 Timothy alone. Instead of letting down in our lives, we need to be even more concerned about holiness and godliness the worse conditions in the world get. We know that the world with its lust is passing away (as the Apostle John has told us), but that those who do the will of God abide forever. This is the mark of a Christian; he does the will of God.

I don’t believe that the Apostle Peter was seeking to set up an order of events here in this chapter. He would assure us that God will leave nothing undone that He has promised that He would do. But his main point is that we are not to go the way of the world. The darker conditions get in the world, the more intense we would should be in seeking to live to glorify our Lord by being like Him.

Concl: Let me conclude by reading the last five verses of 2 Peter 3, verses 14-18. These were Peter’s final words in Scripture, and I don’t know of any message that is more important for us today than the

message which the Apostle Peter has given us in this passage.

(Read 2 Pet. 3:14-18.)

None of us is as holy as we should be; none of us is as godly as we should be. And we never become completely holy, nor completely godly, in this life. But we need to be growing. If we are going to continue to “grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ,” we must continue to read our Bibles, and to pray, and to trust God to give us the strength to say “no” to sin, and to say “yes” to all that the Lord has told us to do in His Word. Let us read our Bibles seeking to learn all that we can about our Lord. This is one reason I have started reading the NT two times every year. We grow in grace as we grow in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, the kind of knowledge that really changes our lives.

THE “MUST” OF ETERNAL GLORY

1 Corinthians 15:53

Intro: Chapter 15 of 1 Corinthians is *the resurrection chapter of the Bible*. By that I do not mean that it is the only chapter that speaks of resurrection (because there are many). But what I do mean is that it is in this chapter that the subject of resurrection and the glory that will follow is treated more thoroughly here than in any other chapter. And the Apostle Paul in this chapter traced the teaching of the resurrection back to the resurrection of Christ. See v. 4.

In Paul’s day, as in our day, there were those who denied any such doctrine. The Sadducees were among the strongest opponents of this doctrine. They were the ones who cooked up the story about a man who had a wife, but he died without having any children. So, according to the law, his brother married the widow to raise up an heir for his brother. He died also, and another brother married the woman who had been married to his two brothers. There were seven brothers in all, and each one had the widow of the first brother. The question was, who would have her in the resurrection. The Lord responded with these words:

29 Jesus answered and said unto them, Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God.

30 For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven (Matt. 22:29-30). They thought that they had the Lord, but He corrected their doctrine.

There are many today who deny the doctrine of the resurrection, even the bodily resurrection of our Lord. They believe that when we die that is the end of us. They refuse to consider any life after death. But that is where they are making the most tragic mistake that anyone can possibly make because those people die without God, without Christ, and without any hope.

The believers in the early church believed that Christ was going to come back during their lifetime. And so when some began to die, and Christ had not come back, they were greatly disturbed. That is when the Holy Spirit directed the Apostle Paul to write those wonderful and comforting words found at the end of 1 Thessalonians 4. This is what the Apostle Paul told them:

13 But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope.

14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.

15 For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep.

16 For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:

17 Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

18 Wherefore comfort one another with these words (1 Thess. 4:13-18).

In that passage the Apostle Paul, writing by the Holy Spirit, assured the believers in Thessalonica that those who died knowing Christ, would be raised from the dead when Christ comes. *But he did not say anything about how they would be raised, i.e., in what condition, nor did he say anything about living believers except that all of us would be caught up to meet the Lord, "and so shall we ever be with the Lord."*

If that were all that Paul could have written about the coming of the Lord, that would have been more than any of us deserves. But that is not all! It was after Paul had written 1 and 2 Thessalonians that he wrote 1 and 2 Corinthians. And in 1 Corinthians 15 Paul went into more detail. And now let me read my text for this evening: 1 Cor. 15:51-58. (Read.)

Paul called this teaching *a mystery*, not because it was more difficult to understand, but because the details given here had not been given before. What he wrote here harmonized perfectly with what he had written earlier to the Thessalonians, but he was more specific. Here he said that no every believer will die, but that we shall all be changed. And he used two sets of words to describe the changes. As we read, Paul said that "the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we", i.e., *the living*, "shall be changed." And it will all take place in the twinkling of an eye. So from "corruptible" to "incorruption" is the first set of words, and Paul used this set to describe the resurrection of those who die before the Lord returns.

The other set of words which Paul used, and which applies to us if we live until the Lord returns, are the words "mortal" and "immortality." A mortal person is a person who is subject to death. That describes all of us. We haven't died yet, but we are going to die if the Lord does not come

before our life on earth is completed.

So, when Christ comes, the dead, whose bodies are in corruption, will be raised “incorruptible,” and those who are living at that time, who have mortal bodies (as we all do), will have their bodies changed so that they will become immortal—no longer subject to death.

Now you ask me the question, What is the difference between an incorruptible body and an immortal body? And I will respond that there is no difference at all. The two words are used to describe what your condition was when the Lord returned. As of tonight, if the Lord were to come tonight, our bodies would immediately become immortal. But I have a mother and a father, a brother and a sister, who are now with the Lord, they would be raised from the death and their bodies would then become incorruptible. We would all be freed forever from the dominion of death. This is how death will finally be defeated.

But does the Bible give us any more information about what our bodies will be like at that time? Yes, it does.

There are several passages we could turn to, but let me take you to two verses at the end of Philippians chapter 3, verses 20 and 21. This is what Paul wrote to the believers at Philippi:

20 For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ:

21 Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself (Phil. 3:20-21).

With this passage we learn that we will be glorified when we have a body like our Savior had when He was raised from the dead. The Apostle John said in 1 John 3:2,

Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.

So this is what makes us very interested not only in whether or not Jesus Christ was raised from the dead, and what was the condition of His body after His resurrection.

Going back to 1 Corinthians 15, we see from verse 12 on down to verse 19 what we have to give up if Christ were not raised from the dead. (Read.)

Then notice the positive teaching which follows in 1 Cor. 15:20-26.
(Read.)

What do we know about the resurrection body of our Lord Jesus Christ?

We know that it was the same body in which He had lived and died. It had the marks of the nails in His hands and feet, and the hole where the spear had been driven into His side. We know that he ate food with His disciples, but we do not know if He had to eat. We know what He said to His disciples when He met with them after His resurrection. Let me read Luke's account to you:

36 And as they thus spake, Jesus himself stood in the midst of them, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you.

37 But they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit.

38 And he said unto them, Why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts?

39 Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have.

40 And when he had thus spoken, he shewed them his hands and his feet.

41 And while they yet believed not for joy, and wondered, he said unto them, Have ye here any meat?

42 And they gave him a piece of a broiled fish, and of an honeycomb.

43 And he took it, and did eat before them.

44 And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me.

45 Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures,

46 And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day:

47 And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.

48 And ye are witnesses of these things (Luke 24:36-48).

I trust that going through these passages has helped you to understand what awaits us at the coming of the Lord. This is our glorification that we are talking about. How can we be assured that all of this is really going to

take place, and we will be changed and made like our Lord? To answer this I want you to go with me to the text that started me on this delightful path of teaching: 1 Cor. 15:53:

For this corruptible **must** put on incorruption, and this mortal *must* put on immortality.

The first answer to the question is:

I. BECAUSE GOD HAS DECREED IT.

I have in my library a three-volume commentary on the whole Bible written by Matthew Poole who lived from 1624 to 1679. And his answer, taken from his comments on this verse, is, “God hath so decreed” (Vol. III, p. 598).

That is what he learned, and that is what we need to learn from Paul’s use of the word “must” in this verse. It means that God has decreed it. And what God decrees, stands forever. God will never change what He has decreed. Listen to what Isaiah wrote seven hundred years before our Lord came to earth about the counsels of God:

9 Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me,
10 Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure (Isa. 46:9-10).

And this is in agreement with the words of the Apostle Paul in Rom. 8:28-29:

28 And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.
29 For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.

What God has predestinated, He has decreed. And His decrees shall stand.

But let me give you two other reasons for our certainty in this, but they are also related to what God has decreed.

II. THE SCRIPTURES REQUIRE IT.

In reading to you from Luke 24 we had this verse:

And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things **must** be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me (Luke 24:44).

Do you see our word “must” in that verse? The resurrection of Christ had to be. There was no possibility that our Lord would have remained dead in the grave.

One more reason, and this is in 1 Cor. 15:20:

III. THE VERY RESURRECTION OF CHRIST DEMANDS IT.

What does this verse say? It says this (and I will read the three verses which follow it):

20 But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept.

21 For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead.

22 For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.

23 But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming (1 Cor. 15:20-23).

Christ died for us, but we also died in Him. He not only conquered death for Himself, but He conquered death for us. And He has promised us in John 14:19 that, as He said, “Because I live, ye shall live also.”

IV. OUR SALVATION WOULD BE INCOMPLETE WITHOUT OUR GLORIFICATION.

Romans 8:30 tells us this:

Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.

The end of justification and sanctification is glorification. And the work of salvation would not be complete without our final glorification.

Concl: What more needs to be said? The Scriptures cannot be broken.

God's Word stands firm and true. So let us rejoice that our hope is not an empty hope, but stands firmly upon the faithfulness of God.