

PROPOSED SUMMARY for GOSPEL- WITNESSING

**We are account-
able to God.**

We are God's creatures.

"For of Him and through Him and unto Him are all things. To Whom be glory forever. Amen!" Romans 11:36 cf. Acts 14:15; 17:24
We must acknowledge God's right over us. Life is only meaningful according to God's plan.

God gave us His Law.

**How we should
live**

"Behold I set before you a blessing and a curse: the blessing if you obey the commandments of the Lord your God... and the curse, if you do not obey the commandments of the Lord." Deut.11:26-28

**Consequence of
Disobedience**

**We are under
God's condemna-
tion because of
sin.**

God's justice demands the punish- ment of the guilty.

"By the deeds of the Law, no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the Law is the knowledge of sin." Rom. 3:20

**Salvation is
accomplished
only in Christ.**

God's love and mercy designed salva- tion for sinners.

"[God] desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth." 1Ti.2:4

Christ is the Substitute of Sinners.

"Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us." Gal. 3:13

**Salvation is of-
fered to us in the
gospel.**

Come to Christ for salvation.

**Repent of
your sin.**

"repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ." Acts 20:21

**Believe in the
Lord Jesus.**

FOREWORD

Evangelism by systematic teaching of Biblical truths is not fashionable today. What is in style? It is "gospel-sharing" that presents the minimum of substance and evades the core issues of the law and the gospel. It urges a verbal acceptance of Christ even if real conviction of sin is absent. What matters to the soul-winner is that it secures visible results of "decisions for Christ," though in many cases, they prove to be without the commitment of a disciple.

We reject this shallow approach on such a vital issue as bearing witness to the gospel. We maintain that approach in evangelism where God truly is glorified, the essential issues of the gospel presented and taught, and the sinner is confronted both with his guilt before God's law and with God's offer of mercy in Christ Jesus. This evangelism results in either rejection, or - as we pray it would be the case - in discipleship.

There lies the difference. Shallow "gospel-sharing" can easily secure decisions; but we are after disciples! And disciples, as the term suggests ("learners"), are conceived, born, and grow under the faithful teaching of the gospel and the whole counsel of God. This is the rationale for this material.

In the following pages, I humbly offer outlines for Bible-study which cover: *Knowing the True God; The Way of Salvation;* and *The New Christian.* They are designed for use as evangelistic Bible-studies until the early stages of discipleship. To the user, let me give the following advise:

- (1) You must prepare. This material is not a substitute for your diligent study of what you will present.
- (2) You must be flexible. No outline here is designed for rigid presentation as it appears. Use your wise discretion according to your hearer's condition/needs. Flexibility includes the length of presentation. While every title presents one lesson, it need not be taken up in a single session.
- (3) You must pray. You are to make the lesson something from your own soul, and this happens in the discipline of prayer.

It cannot be overstated here that a key factor for the usefulness of these outlines is not the research of the author, but the faithfulness of the user. There is a crying need for evangelism that disciplines through the sowing and watering of the Word of God. Ours is a generation that is hearing from all quarters all sorts of messages that offer to make life enjoyable. But you and I know that there is that single message on which depends man's joy and peace now and in the hereafter. We know because we once heard it presented to us ourselves — and by the Spirit, we were born again.

Now "ours is the same commission." Remember that you are called to be God's "special people that you may proclaim the praises of Him Who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light" (1 Peter 2:10). When God's people in our church faithfully labor to be such proclaimers, I shall deem my labor amply rewarded...

THE RIGHTS OF GOD

AIM: *To establish the Creator rights of God upon man His creature*

INTRODUCTORY QUESTION - What is man's common idea of God's relation to man?

Possible Answers:

- (a) He makes things happen in the life of man.
- (b) He gives blessings to man.
- (c) He forgives and understands human weaknesses.
- (d) He demands man's obedience and love.

All these answers are true, but the answer of the hearer should give you an idea of his spiritual position.

READ: Genesis 1:1,26,27 *"Then God said, 'Let us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness... So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.'"*

- God created mankind in His own image.

QUESTION - What is the fundamental relationship between God and Man?

CREATOR - CREATURE RELATIONSHIP

Analogy: What are the rights of a maker over his craft?

Possible Answers:

- (a) to be served by it
- (b) to gain from it
- (c) to reflect his own personality, e.g. artwork

Determine if the hearer accepts God as his Creator; be open to his personal problems/objections.

- What may God claim upon man as his Creator?

READ: Psalms 100:2,3 *"Serve the Lord with gladness; Come before His presence with singing. Know that the Lord, He is God; It is He who has made us, and not we ourselves; We are His people and the sheep of His pasture."*

PRINCIPLE of MEANS of GRACE

THOUGHT: God's graces are available to the Christian in his daily walk, but they are generally channeled via means which he must faithfully use.

- **IDENTIFY** the CRUCIAL MEANS of GRACE

Hebrews 10:23-25 — Church fellowship

1Peter 2:1-3 — Nurture of the Word of God

James 4:2,3 — Prayer with paramount spiritual motives.

Emphasize what you know the hearer needs to hear.

- **CHALLENGE:** Make a self-evaluation of your attendance to these means of grace. Where do you find the greatest problem?

Offer to help; share your own struggle/effort.

- **WARNING:** Unless we are serious in the means, we cannot say we are serious about God's graces themselves.

PRINCIPLE of EARTHLY VOCATION

THOUGHT: Whatever your station in life may be, it is claimed by the Lord for His own glory. Therefore, you are to pursue your work as for the Lord.

READ: Colossians 3:17-23 *"And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him... Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh, not with eye service as men-pleasers but in sincerity of heart, fearing God. And whatever you do, do it heartily as to the Lord, and not to men."*

- ★ **NOTE:** Even as menial a job as that of slaves was to be engaged in for the Lord.

1. *Do not pursue it for dishonest/selfish gain* cf. Eph. 4:28

POINT: Work must have a service-orientation — how you can be of help to others.

2. *Always regard your testimony in the eyes of unbelievers.* cf. Col. 4:5,6

THOUGHT: The regular concerns, such as use of time, conversation, have a strong impact upon "outsiders" = unbelievers.

- **CHALLENGE:** In which part of the Christian life do you think you need more application of these principles?

PRINCIPLES OF CHRISTIAN LIVING

AIM: *To introduce key principles about Christian living and to challenge Christian growth*

INTRODUCTORY QUESTION: In your Christian experience, what do you find the most difficult to cope with? What is fulfilling/pleasant?

Living the Christian life is a broad concern and involves a vast number of issues. But it is helpful to keep in mind some KEY PRINCIPLES that the Christian will come back to again and again.

PRINCIPLE of STRUGGLE with SIN

■ **WARNING:** Some present the Christian life as a string of blessings and victories; this often leads to shallowness and artificiality... the Christian tries to match the picture which is unreal because it is unscriptural.

READ: Romans 7:22-25 *“For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man. But I see another law in my members warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? I thank God - through Jesus Christ our Lord! so then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin.” cf. Galatians 5:17.*

★ **NOTE:** the Christian feels the force of an opposing power/presence in him
⇒ result: CONFLICT!

■ **CHRISTIAN PRE-OCCUPATION**

READ: Romans 8:12-14 *“...if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are the sons of God.” cf. Ephesians 6:12*

1. *Mortifying sins* = “killing them”; eliminating reign of sin
Examine: attitudes to sin that are contrary to the goal of mortifying.

2. *Cultivating Gracious virtues* = sin is only overcome when the opposite virtue reigns. cf. 2Pet. 1:5-9

■ **CHALLENGE:** You must have specific sin(s) and virtue(s) in mind which are issues for your Christian life.

BS Leader: Help him to be specific.

(a) Man was created to have a joyful relationship with God.
- Man should be happy about God's rights over him.

(b) Man was designed to be God-like in character.
- note: This is what our human dignity (as opposed to animal character) stands on.

READ: Romans 11:36 *“For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to Whom be glory forever. Amen.”*

■ The right response to the sovereign rights of God:
“of Him” = origin; God is the source of all things
“through Him” = sustenance; His power keeps all things
“unto Him” = goal; His glory is the purpose of all things

■ The Biblical expression of acknowledging God's rights:
To Him be the glory
- to glorify God = worship; service; obedience; dependence

stress the part that will speak most to the hearer

= attitudes and deeds that show the honor of God

SEARCHING QUESTIONS: Is our life seeking the glory of God?

(1) Do you acknowledge God as your Creator Who has rights over you?

(2) Does your life acknowledge these rights by seeking His glory?

(3) Do you sense something in you that makes God seem distant from you or even against you?

Supporting Scriptures

1. God as Creator

Original creation story - Genesis 1 & 2

The Lord created all things - Psa. 33:6; 102:25; Isa. 40:26; 45:12;

Acts 17:24; Rev. 4:11; 10:6

2. Glorifying God as man's duty

God is mindful of His glory - Isaiah 42:8; 48:11

Man to glorify God in all his life - 1 Corinthians 10:31

THE LAW OF GOD

AIM: *To enlighten on God's dealing with man according to Law; and how man stands before the Law of God*

INTRODUCTION: When laws are made in any community (e.g. nation; club), those laws are empowered...

- to require the order of life for the members of the community
- to punish violators of that order (NOTE: If law does not mandate punishment, it is little better than when there is no law.)

- Accepting the existence of God's MORAL LAW -
The Bible defines it in *the Ten Commandments*

READ: Deuteronomy 4:13 *"So He declared to you His covenant which He commanded you to perform, that is, the Ten Commandments; and He wrote them on two tablets of stone."*

Determine the hearer's attitude to being under the Law of God. Note familiarity with the Ten Commandments — what commands does he know?

SUMMARY of the LAW of GOD

READ: Matthew 22:36-40 *"...Jesus said to him, 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."*

stress the part of the Ten Commandments that you believe will speak most to the condition of the hearer.

1. *Loving God with one's all and above all.*
 - 1st "No other gods beside Me" = unrivalled devotion to Him
 - 2nd "Do not bow down to graven images" = spiritual worship
 - 3rd "Do not use the Name of God in vain" = reverence for God/His works
 - 4th "Keep the Sabbath day holy" = separate a day for worship

CONCLUSION: Baptism does not make one a Christian. It is one's confession that he is a Christian.

- The NT inseparably links baptism with faith.

READ: Gal.3:26,27 *"For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ."* cf. Col.2:12.

The NT does not accept: [1] Baptized unbeliever; [2] Unbaptized believer

(c) Method of Baptism: Immersion into Water in the Name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

- ★ NOTE: Greek for "baptize" is *baptizō* which means immerse.
 - There are Greek words for sprinkling and pouring, but they were never used for baptism.

CONCLUSION: It is wrong to consider immersion as interchangeable with any method.

SIGNIFICANCE: It best depicts union with Christ's death and resurrection.

MEANING: What does Baptism do?

(a) A Public Confession of Union with Christ

READ: Romans 6:1-6 *"...do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him in baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead... even so we should walk in newness of life..."*

- ★ NOTE: In reminding Christians about holiness, Paul appeals to their vow in baptism.

CONCLUSION: Baptism is a vow of taking seriously our union with Christ - a vow of Christ-likeness.

(b) Admission into Covenant Membership of the Local Church

READ: Acts 2:41-47 *"those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them... And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved."*

- ★ NOTE: Baptism results in fellowship bond with the baptizing church.
- CHALLENGE: If you consider yourself a Christian, would you accept that your first step of obedience is confessing Christ in baptism?

BAPTISM: BELIEVER'S PUBLIC VOW

AIM: *To challenge obedience to the command of baptism as the initial act of public confession of faith*

INTRODUCTION: Roman Catholics call their baptism an act of "christening" meaning that baptism makes the child a Christian.

ASK hearer to react. (will reveal understanding of salvation)

READ: Acts 2:38-41 *"Repent and let everyone of you be baptized everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit... Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them."*

★ NOTE: Close link between believing and getting baptized as the immediate step of confessing that faith.

EXPLANATION: "for the remission of sins" must not be understood as effect of baptism, but the assumed condition of the one baptized; for sins already remitted, he must be baptized. cf. use of "for your cleansing" in Mark 1:44.

The new relationship between Jesus Christ and the believer demands a public vow and pledge. Its initial act is baptism. Anyone refusing to make this step is, by implication, refusing to be an all-out disciple.

MODE: How is Baptism Administered?

READ: Matthew 28:19,20 *"Make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things whatever I have commanded you..."*

The apostles are given the earthly commission of the church.

(a) Administrator of Baptism: A Biblical Church

READ: Eph.4:4-6 *"There is one body and one Spirit... one Lord, one faith, one baptism..."*

★ NOTE: connection of the "Body" (the church) ⇒ the "Faith" (teaching confessed) ⇒ "Baptism"

CONCLUSION: For baptism to be right, it must be administered in a church that upholds the right gospel-faith.

(b) Subject of Baptism: Confessing believer

"...baptizing them" in Mt. 28:19 refers to those who have been made disciples.

2. *Loving the neighbor as oneself.*

5th "Honor your father and mother" = respect for authority

6th "You shall not kill" = respect for life and personhood of others

7th "You shall not commit adultery" = fidelity to marriage

8th "You shall not steal" = respect for property of others

9th "You shall not bear false witness" = integrity of truth

10th "You shall not covet" = purity of motives and desires

Note the possible open violation by the hearer of any of the commandments, and focus on it.

CURRENT MENTALITIES on how man stands before God's Law

■ **Mentality #1** *"Nobody's perfect. God can't really expect us to be serious about His law."*

READ: Galatians 3:10 *"For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them.'" cf. James 2:10*

★ What is the result of violating God's law?

CURSED - to be set apart by God for destruction/punishment

■ **Mentality #2** *"I try to obey God's law. I merit God's favor."*

READ: Romans 3:19,20 *"Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin."*

★ Where does God's law leave the morality of man?

GUILTY - already under the judgment of God

READ: Matt.5:21,22,27,28 *"...whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment... whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart."*

★ To what extent is obedience to the Law demanded?

INTERNAL - not just external, but state of the heart/desires

Sinner's Confession:

(1) *I have been a violator of God's law and stand guilty.*

(2) *I have no hope of being accepted by God through my efforts.*

THE CHARACTER OF GOD

AIM: To impress on the prospect the character of God which demands appropriate response

INTRODUCTION: Note how the character of people closely associated with us affect our dealing with them.

BS Leader: You can do this by personal testimony about a friend or loved one; or you can ask the prospect about a close person in his life... Ask the prospect what character of God impresses him most...

■ Get reaction to these views of God:

- (1) God has left to man the running of earthly life; and He intervenes only during special occasions.
- (2) God is trying to do man good, but man would not allow God. God helps those who help themselves.

★ **NOTE:** The hearer's answer will disclose his appreciation, or lack of it, of God's active involvement in human life and His sovereignty.

GOD'S CHARACTER IN HIMSELF

READ: Isaiah 40:9,12-18,25-28 "...Behold your God!' Who has measured the waters in the hollow of His hand, measured heaven with a span... Who has directed the Spirit of the Lord, Or as His counselor has taught Him?... Behold the nations are as a drop in a bucket, and are counted as the small dust on the balance... To whom then will you liken God? Or what likeness will you compare to Him?... Why do you say, O Jacob, and speak O Israel: 'My way is hidden from the Lord, and my just claim is passed over by my God?' Have you not known? Have you not heard? The everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, neither faints nor is weary. There is no searching of His understanding."

Context: addressed to God's people who are anticipating the judgment of God - the exile. To the Israelites, it will be like the defeat of God Himself. They needed a reminder of the character of God that bears upon their human experience.

★ **NOTE:** repeated, "behold your God..." = Give close attention to what God is like.

BS leader: for each of the categories of God's character, think of an illustration/analogy understandable to the hearer .

From the cluster of descriptions, God is presented as...

How is the COVENANT MAINTAINED in the CHURCH?

Because Christians still struggle with sin, God has instituted in the church a structure for edification, correction, and where necessary, dismissal from membership.

BS Leader: Ask this not in a threatening or down-grading manner.

★ **DOCTRINE:** DISCIPLINED CHURCH

READ: Romans 15:14 "Now I myself am confident concerning you, my brethren, that you are also full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another."

★ **POINT:** Admonition/correction is the responsibility of members to one another. It is a blessing, not something to intimidate.

READ: Matthew 18:15-20 "If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother. But if he will not hear you, take with you one or two more, that 'by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.' And if he refused to hear them, tell it to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector... whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven..."

★ **NOTE:** There is a gradation of dealing with the offender:

private settlement ⇒ arbitrated (guided) confrontation ⇒ public, in church.

★ **POINT:** heaven itself seals a proper act of church discipline. Most churches today do not practice Church Discipline.

■ **ASK:** Can you live with the idea that in the church, your moral-spiritual life will be under supervision of the church? Or would you prefer a loosely-knit fellowship?

What does the Bible say of sincere correction? Pro.27:6,7

■ **CHALLENGE:** To think of any other context of the Christian life that does

BIBLICAL CHURCH LIFE (II)

INTRODUCTION: Review previous lesson.

How are MEMBERS LED and FED in the CHURCH?

One principal distinction between the NT church and modern para-church organization: God has structured in the church, Leading-Feeding institutions of men He called and gifted for this purpose. In this regard, para-church affiliation is a poor substitute for covenanted membership to a local church.

READ: Ephesians 4:7-12 "... *When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts to men.* ... *And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.*"

★ NOTE: These church officers are given by Christ Himself from His Lordly throne. True church leaders are not "made by men" but "called and equipped by God."

★ What of Apostles and Prophets?

(a) READ: Eph. 2:20 — Their task was in the founding stage of the church which is now past. It was their distinct privilege to receive direct revelation. (cf. Eph. 3:5).

(b) This is no longer the case of the remaining offices in the church: Evangelists-Pastors-Teachers.

What is the quality of Church Leadership?

(1) EVANGELIZING LEADERSHIP - concerned to bring lost men to salvation

Implied Responsibility:

- (a) He preaches the gospel.
- (b) He helps Christians to become gospel-witnesses.

(2) PASTORING-TEACHING LEADERSHIP - equips members for ministry and nurtures them in their spiritual needs.

READ: Hebrews 13:7,17 "*Remember those who rule over you, who have spoken the Word of God to you, whose faith follow, considering the outcome of their conduct... Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account...*" cf. 1Thes. 5:12, 13.

■ ASK: Do you admit your need of this kind of leadership? Do you get it where you are affiliated?

GOD IS INFINITELY PERFECT and SOVEREIGN

- (a) Infinite in what according to v.12?
in His immensity: no physical element can limit Him
- (b) Infinite in what according to vs.13,14?
in wisdom and knowledge: no one can add to His knowledge/counsel
- (c) Infinite in what according to vs.25,26?
in power/might: He can do what His will determines.

■ QUESTION: If we are to accept Isaiah's description of God, how should this affect our thinking of Him?

BS Leader: Ask the hearer if he has ordinary views of God that need to be modified?

CONCLUSIONS ON THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD:

1. vs.21-23 No power in creation can usurp the right and power of God.

"princes and judges" represent all the power that man can come up with — powers of position and wisdom.

Even forces of nature are in God's control.

2. vs.27,28 Nothing in human creation is not accountable to God.

He notes our just claims as well as our sins. He is not a distant Spectator.

■ CHALLENGE: If this view of God were taken seriously, what thoughts should it introduce to your consideration?

■ EMPHASIZE: sense of accountability to God... There is no escaping from the judgment of the sovereign God.

READ: Ecclesiastes 12:13, 14 "*Fear God and keep His commandments for his is the whole duty of man. For God will bring every work into judgment, including every secret thing, whether it is good or whether it is evil.*"

Supporting Scriptures

1. God's infinite attributes:
 - His omnipotence (all-powerful) - Isa. 46:10; Dan. 4:35; Rom. 9:19
 - His omniscience (all-knowing) - Hosea 5:3; Psalm 139:3; Heb. 4:13
 - His omnipresence (all present) - Psalm 139:7-10; Jer. 23:23, 24
 - His eternity - Psalm 90:2; Isa. 57:15; Heb. 1:11, 12; 2Pet. 3:8
2. God's sovereign control over all things:
 - Psalm 115:3; 135:5, 6; Eph. 1:11

GOD'S CHARACTER IN RELATION TO US

- ASK THE PROSPECT: How would you react to the following characterizations of God?

- (1) He is a judging God. He will punish all sinners.
- (2) He is so merciful that He will overlook the sins of men.
- (3) He loves the moral person, and reserves His hatred upon the wicked.

BS Leader: His answer will give you an idea which side of the biblical view you need to stress more.

READ: Exodus 34:5-8 "...The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, by no means clearing the guilty..."

Context: Moses pleads to know God. This is the closest a man could get to a personal introduction by God of Himself.

- ★ NOTE: How do you account for the apparent contrast/paradox in the characters listed? "keeping mercy... forgiving" vs. "by no means clearing the guilty"

It suggests that our view of God's character in relation to us should be seen in two clusters. Each is to be emphasized side by side with the other.

First Cluster: God is MERCIFUL and LOVING

- ★ *It is His nature to seek our good and establish personal relationship with us.*
 - (a) He exercises special concern for those who are in misery because of sin (their sins; or others' sins against them both as sinners themselves, and as victims of sins).
 - (b) "*gracious and longsuffering*" - It is not His first reaction to judge but to be patient and to forbear, even to bless those who do not deserve any blessing.
 - (c) "*forgiving...*" - Cancelling our guilt, and cleansing corruption is the supreme act of grace.
- ASK: What does this say to the idea: God loves the morally righteous,

- POINT: All members make the same confession of Christ's Lordship and experience of salvation.
- ★ DOCTRINE: REGENERATE and SANCTIFIED MEMBERSHIP
 - One joins the church not to become a Christian, but because he has been converted and has the evidence of true salvation.

- CHALLENGE: Is this a good description of your church?

If you are truly converted, do you see it your duty to join a church?

HOW are MEMBERS RECEIVED into the CHURCH?

READ: Acts 9:26-30 "*And when Saul had come to Jerusalem, he tried to join the disciples; but they were all afraid of him, and did not believe that he was a disciple. But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles... so he was with them in Jerusalem coming in and going out...*"

- POINT: The admission was by voluntary acceptance by the church of one's testimony of faith.
- ★ NOTE: Paul could not join until the disciples were convinced of his conversion, which was attested to by Barnabas.

READ: Ephesians 4:13-16 "*till we all come to the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God... that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine... but speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things... from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.*" cf. Heb. 10:23-25

- ★ NOTE: the bond of church members in teaching, ministry to each other, growth, etc.
- ★ DOCTRINE: VOLUNTARY and COVENANTED MEMBERSHIP
 - Joining a church is a free decision. But once received, members are bound to abide by the common confession of beliefs and commitment of Christian responsibilities.

- CHALLENGE: Begin to think seriously of church membership. Resolve to make a decisive step of obedience.

BS Leader: If hearer is unchurched, give a copy of your church covenant, and primer on church membership.

BIBLICAL CHURCH LIFE (I)

AIM: To introduce the New Testament concept of church life and demonstrate its necessity for true Christians

INTRODUCTION: ASK prospect if he is a member of any voluntary organizations, and what good he derives from it. Lead to conclusion that life with a community is part of human life.

- Similarly, there is a designed community for Christians which is an essential focus in the plan of God - the New Testament Church.

READ: Ephesians 3:10,21 *“the intent: now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places... to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen!”*

* God's glory is secured in the church.

■ **TEACHING:** The Christian life is to be lived in the context of being together with other Christians - the church.

READ: Philippians 1:27 *“... you standfast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel.”*

Ephesians 4:1-5 *“... endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in the hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism.”*

■ **ASK:** What could you say about your present church (assuming that he has one)? If none, what is your idea of a good church?

WHAT is a BIBLICAL CHURCH?

Caution: People get bogged down on the question of “What is the true church?”. It often ends up in discussing denominations (e.g. Catholic, Methodist, cults, etc.). This is not the NT idea. In the NT, a church is a local congregation that has the following components of church life...

WHO must COMPOSE the MEMBERSHIP of the CHURCH?

Describe membership in Roman Catholic Church for contrast:

- by birth (in ritual “christening”); by parish/loose membership

READ: 1Corinthians 1:2 *“To the church of God which is in Corinth, to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all who in every place call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours.”* cf. Eph. 4:4-6

BS Leader: Note the particular form of salvation by works to which the hearer probably subscribes.

and hates the wicked?

Do you think you are in need of God's mercy? Why?

■ **CHALLENGE:** Any idea of salvation by meritorious works is wrong because it makes unnecessary the mercy of God.

Second Cluster: God is HOLY and JUST

READ: Habbakuk 1:13 *“You are of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on wickedness...”*

Romans 1:18 *“For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness.”*

As holy and just, He is repelled by every sin however little it is regarded by man. Every sin calls for just punishment. While He exercises patience for the most part now, He will exact the fulness of judgment on the last day.

■ **ASK:** What does this say to the idea: God will overlook our sins? What is your personal reaction to this character of God?

■ **CONCLUSION:** God exercises love and mercy on sinners. This is grace! But He will mete out punishment on the unrepentant and unforgiven as His justice demands.

■ **CHALLENGE:** You have to fear the justice of God. Plead God's Mercy!

Supporting Scriptures

1. God's love and mercy

(a) Love is the very essence of God's character -
Psalm 25:10; 1Jn. 4:8, 16

(b) Love is the basis of God's saving acts -
Hosea 3:1, 2; Jn. 3:16; Rom. 5:6-8; 1Jn. 4:9, 10

(c) God does not presently deal with us in the way that our sinfulness really deserves; this is mercy -
Psalm 103:10; 130:3, 4

2. God's holiness and justice

(a) Holiness is the outstanding distinctive of God's character -
Psalm 99:3; Hos. 11:9; Psalm 24:3; Isa. 6:3

(b) As a just God, He is impartial in the execution of His laws -
Acts 10:34, 35; Rom. 2:3-6

(c) He will surely punish sin -
Psalm 5:4, 5; Rom. 2:16; 2Cor. 5:10, 11

MAN AS SINNER

AIM: To bring conviction of the reality of the state of the soul in sin

INTRODUCTION: Ask for reaction to the following sentiments...

- (1) Man is basically good, but is imperfect. God will understand his failures.
- (2) Only the most wicked offenders deserve God's punishment.
- (3) All men are sinners deserving God's judgment.

WHAT is SIN?

Common Idea: identify sin with crimes, specially the heinous ones...

Most people limit sin to actual deeds of wrongs; or else, that which actually harms others.

- ★ Biblical Concept: Sin is transgression of the law of God.

READ: 1 John 3:4 *"Whoever commits sin transgresses the law, for sin is transgression of the law."*

- ★ The STANDARD — The Law of God

- ASK: Is it right to limit sin to heinous crimes and vices?

BS Leader: Review briefly the 10 Commandments, specially the part that will apply most to the hearer.

Give examples of sins according to God's law, but may not be considered today as criminal or vicious. (e.g. coveting).

READ: James 4:17 *"Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin."*

The EXTENT of sin — includes Sins of OMISSION

Not just actual deeds, but failure to do the right thing is accounted by God as sin.

- ASK: How does this differ from the common idea of sin?

Moral responsibility is not just about avoiding wrong, but doing right for God and man.

Give examples of sins of omission

The SAVING RESPONSE to HIM

To emphasize this, what follows this episode in the gospel is the narrative about Nicodemus' visit to Christ. Jesus' dialogue with Nicodemus presents a good test-case of the assurance of any person who presumes to be religious.

- A man who needed to correct his understanding of Christ
- That understanding will determine assurance of spiritual standing

READ: John 3:1-7 *"... This man came to Jesus by night and said to Him, 'Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him.' Jesus answered and said to him, 'Most assuredly I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God... unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit... You must be born again.'"*

- ★ NOTE: In v.2, how did Nicodemus recognize Jesus?

As Divine Teacher and Miracle-Worker - Nicodemus came to Jesus as needing TEACHING and MIRACLE.

- ★ QUESTION: Is this sufficient?

It is not, for Jesus tells him of something else he really needs.

- ★ QUESTION: Does this happen today?

Observe the prevailing emphasis of Christian discourses on miracles.

- ★ NOTE: In vs.3ff., Jesus introduced the KINGDOM of GOD

- CONCEPT: Jesus is KING and has KINGLY CLAIMS - therefore: You must come to Him as being SUBJECT to His AUTHORITY.

Requirement: You will only do so if you are CHANGED IN HEART

- This is the meaning of being "born again." The giving of a new life that was not there before.

"born of the Spirit" - Only the Holy Spirit can give you that new life;
"born of the flesh is flesh" - there is no hope in your flesh (human status of sinfulness)

- WARNING: There can be faith-actings that prove to be of the flesh.

- The evidence of a fleshly faith...

⇒ view of Jesus that falls short of His absolute Lordship

⇒ no spiritual change of heart

- ASK: Do you know of that spiritual change in your life that is oriented to your new knowledge of Jesus Christ?

- SUMMARY: You must make sure that your coming to Christ is for His Lordship of your life. But with a sense of helplessness because you need HEART-CHANGE which only the Holy Spirit can effect.

MAKING SURE

AIM: *To explain a key measure of true conversion, and warn against the reality of self-deception*

INTRODUCTION: ASK - Do you think one can sincerely believe himself to be a Christian and yet be false?

BS Leader: *Rephrase question if necessary. If hearer's response is affirmative, inquire if he has any idea of the marks that separate the true from the false.*

Avoid making personal allusion to the hearer. If you have experienced, or know someone who did, false profession of faith in the past, share it to the hearer.

READ: John 2:23-25 *“Now when He was in Jerusalem at the Passover, during the feast, many believed in His name when they saw the signs which He did. But Jesus did not commit Himself to them, because He knew all men, and had no need that anyone should testify of man, for He knew what was in man.”*

★ **NOTE:** There were people who made an act of faith, triggered by miracles they witnessed. But Jesus knew them to be false believers.

★ **ISSUE:** Self-made conclusions vs. Jesus' knowledge - One must not presume on his own self-confidence. Will your supposed faith stand the test of Jesus' knowledge?

★ **POINT:** *It is possible to make some kind of “faith-act” with no reality of saving response to Jesus Christ.*

Cite possible faith-acts done in Christian circles

e.g. praying to “invite Christ into the heart”; responding to an altar call; going to church; etc.

■ **CHALLENGE:** If such self-deception is possible even to people who came so close to the message of Jesus, it is important to make sure of what you have.

MAKE SURE: You have...

The TRUE JESUS as HE is OFFERED in the GOSPEL

They only saw Jesus as Miracle-worker. This is not enough to recognize Him as Saviour and Lord.

■ **WARNING:** So much is laid on miracles as evidence of God's work today. But as we see in this case, that does not qualify as saving faith.

READ: Romans 5:12, 18 *“Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned... as through one man's offense judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man's righteous act the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life.”*

The ORIGIN — Adam's Fall

Adam was the representative head of Mankind. His fall was accounted to all humanity; his sin was imputed to all his children.

READ: Romans 5:12; *“Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned.”*

Romans 5:19 *“For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners.. .”*

★ **IMPORTANT POINT:** *We do not become sinners with our first act of sin. Rather, we sin because we are already sinners from the start.*

★ **IMPLICATION:** Our only hope is through another Representative
- the Second Adam is Jesus Christ (implications to be studied later)

CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS:

(1) Given his state of sin, how can man ever attempt to reverse God's judgment?

(2) Is there a possibility that God will forego judgment of sinners?

■ **ASK:** How do you react to the thought that because of sin, God is against you?

BS Leader: *The hearer must come to see helplessness in oneself*

Supporting Scriptures

1. The sinfulness of man

(a) It is universal - Ecclesiastes 7:20; Rom. 3:11, 23; Gal. 3:22

(b) It is total -

there is not a part of our humanity that is not affected by sin -
Jer. 17:9; Jn. 3:19; Titus 1:15; Eph. 2:1-3; 4:18

2. The spiritual helplessness of man because of sin

(a) He cannot understand spiritual truth.

1 Cor. 2:14; 2 Cor. 4:4

(b) He cannot and will not receive the offer of salvation by himself.

Jn. 5:39; 6:44, 65; Rom. 8:7, 8; Heb. 11:6

CONSEQUENCE OF SIN

AIM: *To discover the effects and penalty due to sin*

INTRODUCTION: Ask the prospect for ideas on...

- (1) How to describe man's life on earth.
- basically happy? miserable? etc.
- (2) Life after death.
- nothingness? re-incarnation? judgment?

WHY MUST GOD JUDGE SIN?

Common Idea: God's main business is to forgive and understand mankind's moral weaknesses and sins. God is almost exclusively presented as God of love. Get prospect's reaction.

READ: Romans 1:18 *"For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness."*

The WRATH of God - intense opposition to sin and determination to punish sinners

- **ASK:** What is your reaction to the idea that God can be angry and that He will punish sinners?
- ★ **NOTE:** The scope of His wrath - "all ungodliness and unrighteousness" - extending to all forms of evil; there is no sin that God is not angry at.
- **APPLY:** Will you include yourself as object of God's wrath?

Every sinner's concern: *"How can I flee from the wrath of God against my sins?"*

READ: Romans 1:28-32 *"And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting; being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder strife, deceit, evil-mindedness; they are whisperers... who knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them."*

All MISERIES of Life - All the immoralities and the miseries they bring about in man's life on earth

- ★ **NOTE:** "God gave them over..." As an act of judgment, God may remove his restraints on man's sinfulness.

ACCEPTANCE by GOD and FORGIVENESS of SINS

READ: Ephesians 1:6,7 *"...He has made us accepted in the Beloved. In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace."*

* What is it like to deal with God while sins are unforgiven?

READ: Proverbs 15:8 *"The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord, but the prayer of the upright is His delight."*

Even the religious acts of the unforgiven are "abomination" = under curse

THEREFORE: Forgiveness of sins is a priority blessing. You cannot do "acceptable" things in the hope of being forgiven; but you must first be forgiven to have yourself and deeds be acceptable to God.

HOW: In Christ's redemption by His blood. Cast yourself upon Christ, in seeking forgiveness.

★ **NOTE:** It is "in the Beloved" that the Christian is accepted.

THEREFORE: The truly forgiven retains no confidence in one's merit, but always focussing upon Christ.

READ: Ephesians 2:12,13,17,18 *"But now in Christ Jesus, you who once were far off have been made near by the blood of Christ... For through Him we have access by one Spirit to the Father."*

- **THINK:** What blessings/privileges would be involved in being made near to God; having access to God?
- e.g. new mind-set; privilege of prayer; etc.

The HOLY SPIRIT and GUARANTEE of ALL GOD'S PROMISES

READ: Ephesians 1:13,14 *"In Him you also trusted after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation... having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption..."*

Work of the Spirit is to assure us and apply to us the spiritual promises of God.

THEREFORE: The Christian has assurance now to inherit the fullness of redemption in Christ - future glory.

- **APPLY:** The Christian's life is dictated by his hope in Christ and the application now of the promises of God = obedience to God. This is the real evidence of the spiritual man (person indwelt by the Spirit of God).

CONCLUDING REFLECTION: What blessings of God in Christ am I most after?
Do I have assurance of the spiritual blessings of salvation?

BLESSINGS OF SALVATION

AIM: *To impress upon the prospect the glorious blessings of being a Christian that derive from the new relationship with Christ*

INTRODUCTION: When people speak of being blessed by God, what do they have often in mind?

- (1) Material-Physical blessings
- (2) Providential wonders experienced
- (3) Emotional security and safety
- (4) Vocational/Career advancement

BS Leader:
Give examples for each.

■ **ASK:** Is there anything that are more important than the above?

READ: Ephesians 1:3 *“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ.”*

* *The primary blessings in Christ are “spiritual.”*

★ **NOTE:** In expounding these spiritual blessings in the following verses, nothing is said of the four types of blessings described in the introduction.

THEREFORE: If one comes to Christ primarily for those things, he is missing what Christ is offering.

ADOPTION as GOD’S CHILDREN

READ: Ephesians 1:4, 5 *“He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him, in love having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself...”*

* New relationship with God as Father
- before, as unbeliever: “children of wrath” (2:1-3), our relationship with God is under His wrath
- now, as believer in Christ: adopted as God’s child of love

* New relationship begets new approach to God and new lifestyle.
- What is the child of God most concerned about? *“that we should be holy and without blame.”*
- God has become the believer's Father not for his selfish use, but he is God's child to reflect the character of God in his new life.

■ **CHALLENGE:** This is the distinguishing mark that you must set as evidence for your profession of Christian faith.

Evil man left to himself produces more evils in life.
The Bible sees the evils of life, primarily, in moral terms.
cf. today’s emphasis on social ills: e.g. poverty

■ **APPLY:** Do you accept that miseries in life/society are the results of sinfulness?

- Every sinner’s concern: *“To be delivered from the chief misery of life - my sinfulness.”*

READ: Romans 2:5-11 *“In accordance with your hardness and impenitent heart, you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who will render to each one according to his deeds... tribulation and anguish, on every soul of man who does evil...”*

PUNISHMENT in the DAY of JUDGMENT

★ **NOTE:** While God’s wrath is a present reality, He assigned a Day when it shall have to be executed = “Day of Wrath”

continued unrepentance and hardness of heart = *“treasuring up of wrath”*
The state of those who will receive Wrath: v.9,
“tribulation and anguish” = expressed more vividly in other passages as hell-fire

■ **ASK:** How acceptable/objectionable to you is the thought of future punishment in the after-life?

Every sinner’s concern: *“How can I be saved from the punishment which I deserve because of sin?”*

CONCLUDING REFLECTION: “In being a sinner, I am already experiencing the effects of sin in my life, with the further threat of final judgment. Do I have sufficient remedy for sin?”

Supporting Scriptures

1. God’s wrath against sin:
He cannot look at sin without indignation,
Habakkuk 1:13
Mankind so richly deserves God’s wrath that in their natural state, they are called “children of wrath,”
Eph. 2:3; cf. Jn. 3:36
2. Punishment of hell-fire:
Place of eternal banishment from God’s presence,
Matt. 7:23; 25:41
Conscious torment of fire for unsaved sinners,
Rev. 14:10, 11; 21:8

JESUS CHRIST: THE ONLY SAVIOUR OF SINNERS

AIM: To introduce Jesus as the One that addresses the sinner's problem of sin

INTRODUCTION: What is your most distinct idea about Jesus Christ? If you consider Him different, in what specific way is He different?

Common Ideas —
He is an excellent moral example
Greatest Teacher that ever lived
Founder of the greatest religion

BS Leader: While all of these are correct, they are inadequate. What we are after is a saving knowledge of Christ.

The BIRTH of JESUS CHRIST

READ: Luke 1:35 "And the angel answered and said to (Mary) 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God.'"

- ★ His is a supernatural birth because it was a virgin birth.
- **ASK:** Do you think there is an explanation for this, or do you accept this as a supernatural act of God?

What are the implications of Jesus' virgin birth?

- (a) In being born, He shares true human nature with us.
- (b) In being virgin-born, He is not like any human... He does not share humanity's sin.

BS Leader: this is important in establishing later in this series the substitutionary work of Christ.

READ: (both elements present) Hebrews 4:15 "For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin."

- **ASK:** If you accept this biblical testimony to the uniqueness of Jesus, should this affirm/change your present view of Him?
- ★ **NOTE:** The uniqueness lies in the One virgin-born (Jesus Himself), not in the virgin giving birth (Mary).
- **ASK:** Do you accept this?
How does this bear upon Mary-exaltation today?

READ: Isaiah 55:7 "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the Lord, and He will have mercy on him; and to our God for He will abundantly pardon."

- ★ **Key Idea:** "forsaking sin" = a turning of the heart against sin; declaring war against sin

"forsaking his ways" = inner heart-change toward sin will result in active ways-change (life-pattern)

BS Leader: Bring up if you are sufficiently in the confidence of the hearer - Is there any sin that you would like to discuss?

- **WARNING:** Some understand the gospel-offer, but will remain unsaved because they prefer to be willing slaves of their sins.

Faith in Christ

- This is not:
- (a) Simply agreeing to the facts of the gospel
 - (b) Simply claiming Bible promises

READ: Romans 10:9-13 "If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved... For the Scripture says, 'Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame'... For 'whoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved'"

- ★ **Key Idea:** Jesus is Lord, claiming your trust and submission.

(1) trusting in Jesus as the Only One Who can save you
- the focus is Christ's dying for sinners, and rising again.

- (2) submitting to Him as Lord of your life
- the focus is the authority of Christ in His Word.

BS Leader: Show that this response is radically transforming.

- **ASK:** Is there any significant difference with the way you have understood repentance and faith before?

BS Leader: Give emphasis to the side (repentance or faith) that may be needed by the prospect.

CONCLUDING NOTE: Repentance from sin and Faith in Christ always go together. It is erroneous to claim one without the other.

SAVING RESPONSE TO JESUS CHRIST: REPENTANCE AND FAITH

AIM: *To challenge to respond to the gospel offer of salvation by repentance and faith*

INTRODUCTION: If there is no salvation outside of Jesus Christ, it is very essential that we know how we can have a saving relationship with Him.

■ **ASK:** Comment on the following ideas of becoming Christ's (Christian)

- (1) By baptism, or any of the church sacraments.
- (2) By becoming a member of a church.
- (3) By doing one's best to be good and righteous.

Problem with all human ideas of gaining salvation: They fail to reckon with man's already condemned condition in sin. A man already condemned cannot hope for personal merits to overturn his condemnation.

READ: Romans 3:19,20 *"Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin."*

BIBLICAL TEACHING: God Himself must begin a work in us — an inner change — to make us respond to His offer of salvation. This inner change is called regeneration ("being born again"). This is God's work, not our effort.

When God truly works in us, it will result in the saving response to the gospel...

SAVING RESPONSE to the GOSPEL

READ: Acts 20:21 *"testifying to both Jews and Greeks: repentance toward God, and faith toward the Lord Jesus Christ."*

A single response with two faces - one having to do with our sin against God; the other with the offer of mercy in Jesus Christ.

Repentance from Sin

This is not:

- (a) Self-punishment
- (b) Simply being sorry for sin

The PERSON and MISSION of JESUS CHRIST

READ: John 1:1 *"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."*

Philippians 2:5-11 *"...being in the form of God, He did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a servant... He humbled Himself and became obedient to death... Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow... and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."*

■ **ASK:** From these passages, would you accept that...

Jesus has all the character of God, and therefore He is God.

"in the form of God..." = has all the qualities of God

■ **ASK:** is this acceptable to you?
Why do you/do not accept this?

BS Leader: must be prepared to argue the case for the deity of Christ if it is necessary .

He humbled Himself for the purpose of saving sinners.

His humbling Himself involved becoming man in order to...

- (a) *by Himself obey perfectly the Law*
cf. "became obedient..." cf. Gal. 4:4
- (b) *take upon Himself the punishment of the Law*
cf. "obedient unto death"

■ **ASK:** Why do you think was it necessary for God the Son to humble Himself in order to save us? (This prepares for the next lesson.)

CONCLUDING REFLECTION: God's plan of salvation is unique...

⇒ Would you agree that there is no salvation outside of Jesus?

⇒ Are you personally seeking/hoping for salvation outside of Christ?

Supporting Scriptures: The Deity of Christ

1. Directly called God - Jn. 20:28; Rom. 9:5; Tit. 2:13; Heb. 1:8; 1Jn. 5:20
2. Character of God - Matt. 18:20; 28:20; Eph. 1:23; Col. 3:2; Heb. 13:8

THE SAVING DEATH OF JESUS CHRIST

AIM: *To explain the saving significance of the death of Christ*

INTRODUCTION: The cross has become the most prominent symbol of the Christian religion...

- Positive: It recalls the focus of Christ's saving work - His death for sinners
- Negative: It is an evidence of our tendency to reduce to a mere figure what should be a matter of mind and faith.

■ **ASK:** Do you accept that it is only through the death of Christ that salvation can be secured?

WRONG IDEAS ABOUT the DEATH of CHRIST

1. That it is an act of martyrdom - a self-sacrifice for a cause

ANSWER: But this kind of dying simply establishes the martyr as hero, but not as Saviour of sinners. This is not the way the NT presents the death of Christ.

WRONG: To think of the death of Christ primarily as a model for imitation (e.g. being a martyr; religious penance)

2. That its purpose was to exert moral influence - e.g. to soften man's heart (e.g. like a protestor's hunger strike to win sympathy to his cause)

ANSWER: The NT presents the death of Christ as primarily doing something to God the Father, before any effect on sinners was secured.

WRONG: To think of the death of Christ for mere inspirational sentiments and emotional effects

BIBLICAL SIGNIFICANCE of the DEATH of CHRIST

READ: Matthew 26:27-29 "...For this is my blood of the New Covenant which is shed for many for the remission of sins. But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in MY Father's kingdom."

Context: the instituting of the Lord's Supper which will become the pictorial commemoration by the church of the meaning of Christ's death.

★ **POINT:** *Jesus Himself viewed His own death as a sacrifice that will result in the forgiveness and cleansing of His people.*

- OT sense of sacrifice: the victim is being consumed by God's wrath in the place of the offerer (cf. Lev. 17:5, 6, 11; Isa. 53:10).

★ **IMPLICATION:** When Jesus was on the Cross, it was God Himself who was "consuming" Him with His wrath for the sake of sinners.

READ: 2 Corinthians 5:20,21 "*Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God. For He made Him who knew no sin to be in the place of sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.*"

Context: Paul is explaining the key message of the "ambassadors of God" that calls for reconciliation of sinners with God.

★ **POINT:** *The death of Jesus was an act of Substitution.*

- Jesus took upon Himself the punishment of sinners from God. Just as He obeyed perfectly the requirements of the law that sinners cannot obey.

- This addresses the two problems of sinners before the Law of God:

- * Its demand for perfect obedience
- * Its demand for penalty on the disobedient

READ: Galatians 3:10,13 "*Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them'... Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree')*"

★ **IMPLICATION:** This enforces the point that no man can stand for himself before God.

READ: 1 Peter 2:20,21 "*For what credit is it if, when you are beaten for your faults, you take it patiently? But when you do good and suffer for it, if you take it patiently, this is commendable before God. For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example that you should follow His steps.*"

Context: letter addressed to suffering believers.

★ **POINT:** *The Cross of Christ establishes the note of the Christian life: humility, especially in times of suffering.*

■ **ASK:** Is this the kind of life that you see in professing Christians? It is not so. For many so-called Christians have had no real faith-encounter with the Cross of Christ.

CONCLUDING REFLECTION: Without the saving death of Christ, sinners will remain exposed to the wrath of God, and they will have to stand for themselves which is hopeless. Do you see your need for Christ to die for you?

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*"From you, the Word of the Lord has sounded forth ... Your faith toward God has gone out."
1 Thessalonians 1:8*

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The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom. Prov. 9:10