



## The Pulpit Exchange

It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe (1 Corinthians 1:21). So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading (Nehemiah 8:8). Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend (Proverbs 27:17).

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### The Casualty of Casualness

I invite you to turn to Revelation 3. We find in Revelation 3:14–22 some words from the Lord in relation to the subject that we are looking at *The Casualty of Casualness*. I) We could raise the question first of all, what is casualness? In thinking of casualness defined 2 Timothy 3, the first several verses tell us “that in the last days perilous times shall come” (verse 1). We believe that we are living

in those perilous times. The last days are upon us. It says among other things that, “men shall be lovers of their own selves” (verse 2). It says they shall be “lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; (5) Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof” (verses 4, 5). That is the picture of casualness: having a form of godliness but denying the power thereof. “From such turn away.” It is important that

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we have a godliness that is not merely an outward form but is also changing our lives.

The word “casual” according to the dictionary means “subject to, resulting from, or occurring by chance.” When we think about being casual we think about chance — simply letting it happen as it happens. An antonym (an opposite) would be deliberate — when a person is not casual; he is deliberate. He makes some definite choices. He

does not simply let things happen however they happen to happen, we could say. Casualness, the dictionary defines as, “feeling, or showing little concern.” We also define casual as “nonchalant” [not important, lacking conviction or zeal, lack of concern (literally not hot)]. Nonchalant is “giving an effect of easy unconcern or indifference, lacking in love.” An antonym would be “ardent.”

That is much like the king

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whenever he was sitting there and they were reading the Word of God to him. He had his penknife handy and he cut some off and he threw it in the fire and cut some more and threw it in the fire and simply continued on [see Jeremiah 36:23]. He did not seem to care at all about the Word of God. It was an effect of easy unconcern or indifference. He did not care. It was a casualness on his part toward the Word of God.

In Revelation 3:14–22 we notice another word that is a synonym for casualness. “And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God; (15) I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. (16) So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth. (17) Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: (18) I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and

anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see. (19) As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent. (20) Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me. (21) To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne. (22) He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.”

I am wondering if one of the school children could tell us the word that is in these verses which is the same as casualness, or as casual? I find also in this passage a word that is the opposite. I want you to look for that too. It is “lukewarm.” God says that He wishes that they were cold or hot because then it would be obviously one side or the other. They were trying to go in the middle of the road. They were trying to serve the Lord and then they were also trying to get by with serving the devil. God said “It does not work.” However, there is another word in here that is the opposite of being lukewarm. It is “zealous” in verse 19, “As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.”

The word *lukewarm* as defined by Strong's means, "tepid." The dictionary defines *tepid* as "lukewarm, marked by an absence of enthusiasm or conviction." That is an interesting definition. The apostle Paul was not a casual person. He was a person who had a lot of enthusiasm. He was out there very busily before he was the apostle Paul, while he was still Saul. He was very busily seeking to find those people who were following "this way" (Acts 9:2), the will of the Lord Jesus and to deliver them to prison and to have them judged. He was working quite against that. He was not a casual person. He was a zealous person, but his "zeal . . . [was without] . . . knowledge" (Romans 10:2). He did have some conviction but it was not for the right thing.

This thought of being lukewarm is the opposite. The person simply cannot seem to get enthused about very much that is important, especially as we think of it in relation to the Christian life. God says in Revelation 3:17b, "and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." They are people who are spiritually lacking very much because they did not have a close relationship with the Lord.

II) *Let us think in the second*

*place now of casualness produced.* What is it that produces casualness, especially as it applies to us? What might help us to be casual? I will suggest a few answers. 1) One is our easy lifestyle. It tends to casualness. How long does it take you to earn the food that your family eat in one day? There are probably not very many of us here that know the answer to that question. Especially not the younger ones. Nevertheless, as adults, the fathers here today, how long does it take us to earn our daily bread — what it takes to feed our family for one day?

It might take less than an hour. It might take less than three hours. Is there anyone here that is sure that it takes you longer than half a day to earn the food that goes on the table in a day's time? There are a lot of people in this world who must work more than half a day, probably even the majority of the day, to pay for the food that they eat in a day's time. We have an easy lifestyle.

How long does it take us to do our chores? What are the chores we have, if we have any? Let us include all of ourselves in that. The work that we have to do in a day's time, how long does it take? I know that the fathers work hard and that the mothers work hard and many others do

too, but still we have it easy. This tends to casualness. Why get so excited, if after all you know we will have enough to eat anyway? Why work so long? Why work so hard? It tends to casualness. This casualness in physical things tends to transfer over to spiritual matters as well.

Turn to Ezekiel 16:49 and note that in this verse we also have a number of things named that are fitting to us, or are at least close to us. Maybe we are not guilty of these things, but they are at least very much within our reach. He was speaking to Jerusalem, the children of Israel, “Behold, this was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom, pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness was in her and in her daughters, neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy.” If we would go back a hundred years our fathers, our grandfathers, our great grandfathers, how many generations back, there probably is not a person here who would not have ancestors who needed to work a good bit of the time simply to exist, to stay alive. We have a lot more time than that which can give the “abundance of idleness.” We know the old saying “Idleness is the devil’s workshop.”

Well, one of the things that go along with that is a temptation to

casualness, like “Why get so excited? Why be so concerned?” “Fullness of bread” — is there anyone here who is lacking food from the noon meal? Well, no if we are, it is our own fault. We have abundance and we have it day after day after day. Pride is not very far away from us. We need to crucify it again, and again, and again. This tends to casualness.

2) *Earthly mindedness tends to spiritual casualness.* The abundance of things can take our focus off the eternal. We have so many gadgets nowadays that are so readily available and these can take our focus off the eternal. We can become very fascinated maybe with that new tractor that new toy, that new vehicle, or that new dress, or we can become fascinated by so many things on this earth — that new sewing machine. The abundance of things can take our focus of the eternal. It tends to casualness.

3) *The increase of evil around us tends to dull our consciences and produce casualness.* There is the increase of evil because so many other people are indifferent and casual. I doubt if we realize how much society has changed. If you go to the doctor, whichever doctor you go to raise your hand if your doctor is not dressed in a suit and a tie. All right, it is

quite rare. I am not holding that up as the thing to do. How many of you have seen your doctor dressed in normal everyday clothes maybe even wearing jeans?

That is the way it often is in society in general. It is simply an illustration of what has happened in society where not that many years ago there was a lot more carefulness in relation to personal appearance. Some of these things tend to “rub off” or influence us, and we need to be careful. These things do tend to produce casualness. There are a lot more things that are even more serious than that. Of course, society around us is very dull about them and indifferent to spiritual matters, and it tends to influence us and produce casualness.

III) *Let us think in the third place about casualness expressed.* How does casualness show itself? Revelation 3:17 says, “and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable.” 1) One of the expressions is casualness about our greatest need — the true riches. We can be very indifferent about our greatest need — the true riches. In verse 18 God says, “I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire.” In Isaiah 55:1 God says, “Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye

to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.” He goes on and says, “Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not” (verse 2)?

Recently, a local person where we are from asked me if we observed Christmas. I told him, “Yes, we have a service and we think about the birth of Christ. We do remember what He has done for us.” Then, he said, “I guess, it is without the commercialization.” I said, “Yes, without the commercialization.” He figured that the commercialization is a fairly empty thing. There really is not much to it. A lot of people at that time of year are trying to satisfy their souls with that — with the spirit of Christmas, and with the focus on the things of this earth, on a particular season, on gift giving, and a lot more. You are familiar with what the focus is. How many people really take time to think about why Jesus came? How many people really take time to think about the message of the songs?

In Jeremiah 2:13, the prophet Jeremiah spoke the words of God. He said, “For my people have committed two evils; they

have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water.” There are a lot of broken cisterns around. One of them is alcohol. One of them is drugs. Another one of them is the spirit of Christmas. You can add to that list. There are a lot of things. One of them is work that people try to drown out their troubles with work. There is a right place for work, and you can add to that list. There are a lot of things whereby people try to find satisfaction for their souls in the things of this earth and they are very casual about the things that really count.

One of the greatest illustrations of this casualness about our greatest need of true riches is casualness about hearing the Word of God. On Thursday evening when we gathered for a service at Decker Lake [British Columbia] the parking lot was full when we got there. The church building is next to the public school and there was some kind of event happening there. A lot of people had needed parking spaces. Therefore, they parked in our parking lot. I thought “What a difference it would be if there were that many people who were interested in coming and hearing the Word of God.”

How about you and I? What

kind of interest do we have in hearing the Word of God? How easy is it for us to focus our attention on the Word that is spoken? When it comes to personal communion with God, is there a casualness? “If I have time.” Is that how we approach our family devotions? — “If nothing else interferes.” Or, church attendance, “If I feel like it.” Or, “If I am not too tired.” Is that the approach that we take? That is casualness toward the Word of God and toward hearing the Word of God if that is our approach.

What did I read in my personal devotions this past week? Can we remember? Am I applying what I read to my own life? Am I really hearing the Word of God? This morning what we heard in the messages, or last Sunday morning or . . . Are we hearing the Word of God? Are we applying it to our lives again and again as we read the Word of God on our own? Do we think about other people? Or, do we think about ourselves? Do we compare our lives to the Word of God? Or, do we compare others’ lives to the Word of God. It makes a difference between casualness or not.

B) In Mark 4:14–20 Jesus gave the parable of the Sower. He said, “The sower soweth the

word. . . (18) And these are they which are sown among thorns; such as hear the word. . .” And then there are several things that choke it. What are they? Can you name them? “(19) And the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful.” i) *Yes, the cares of this world.* After all, we do need to get the food ready. We need to wash the dishes, and we need to wash the clothes. We need to go and do our work in order to try and earn a living. These are things that are cares of this world. They are right and necessary. However, do we allow them to choke out the Word of God. Or, do we place a priority on the Word of God, on our time with the Lord and then put our energies into these other matters.

ii) “And the deceitfulness of riches.” Yes, they look so appealing. It seems like it would be so nice to have a little more, a little more, a little more, and yet they never satisfy. They are deceitful. They can disappear very quickly with fire, flood wind, or storm.

iii) “And the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word.” Those are things that hinder and can be a source or an expression of casualness. Job

said, “I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food” (Job 23:12). We could ask ourselves the question, “Can I live without the living bread.” Do I try it? Or, do I feel a real emptiness in my soul if I have missed time with the Lord? Or, family devotions or the public assembly with the saints to hear the Word of God, do I feel a lack, do I miss it if I am sick and I cannot be present? Do I miss it? Does it stir a desire in me for the Living Bread, stir my appetite? That is good evidence if it does.

A number of years ago a brother asked us to look after his animals while they went to Pennsylvania for Bible school, I think it was. I do not have very much experience with that and I was afraid that I would make him a lot of trouble. I asked, “How am I supposed to know if they are okay or not?” He gave me an answer that has stuck with me. He said, “One fairly good sign is their appetite. If they are eating, if they are hungry that is usually a fairly good sign that they have good health.”

Think about that in relation to spiritual matters. You think about that in relation to physical health. Mothers know that. We become very concerned if our children have no appetite.

Something is wrong. In relation to spiritual matters if there is no appetite something is wrong. A good healthy appetite for the Word of God is a good indicator that there is not casualness there.

C) *Casualness about self-denial and cross bearing.* This is another in relation to our greatest needs. Do I count my own flesh, my own carnal desires an enemy to righteousness? Or, do I consider it to be something good, my own flesh, my carnal desires? How do I look at them? Are they an enemy to righteousness or do I count them my friend? In John 12:24 Jesus said, “Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone.”

2) *Casualness is expressed in casualness about the great conflict.* The Lord said, “knowest not that thou art . . . poor” (Revelation 3:17). This word *poor*, according to Strong’s carries the idea of being someone who is out there begging — a real beggar, a genuine beggar. It is casualness about clear identity with Jesus Christ. “Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words . . . of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed” (Mark 8:38).

How about it? In relation to the great conflict and casualness about the great conflict, are we casual with identifying with

Jesus Christ? Do we rise to our feet to honour an incoming bride or do we stay seated? Who do we give honour to? Brethren, do we feel uncomfortable to go to town or into a place of business wearing a plain suit? If so, why? Why would we feel uncomfortable? Sisters are you ashamed to be seen with several children? Brethren, do we smile at off-coloured jokes?

We can add to this list. Are we willing to bear the “reproach of Christ” (Hebrews 11:26; see also 1 Peter 4:14)? You know, are we ashamed of Jesus Christ? Are we ashamed to be identified with Him? Or, are we willing to be identified as one who is following the Master, one who is seeking to be holy in all areas of life?

B) *Another area of casualness about the great conflict would be casualness about winning the world versus being won by the world.* Do we borrow from the world? Do we beg from the world in our speech, in our dress and in our entertainment? Or, are we rich enough to have something to offer to them, something worthwhile to offer those around us? Are we casual about winning the world versus being won by the world?

C) *Another area of casualness about the great conflict would be casualness about parental*

*responsibilities.* Do we realize that we have a foe? The devil is out to destroy our homes. Are we diligent in our efforts to build our relationships one with another as husband and wife? Are we diligent in our efforts to bring up our children “in the nurture and admonition of the Lord” (Ephesians 6:4)? This is related to this matter of the great conflict.

D) Another area would be casualness about spreading the Gospel. Do we have a concern and a burden for our brethren or our sister in the Lord enough that we are willing to actually practice what we do, what we mean when we wash each other’s feet? Do we care about our brother enough to go and speak to him when we see that there is something that really should be improved? Or, at least it appears to us that way. Do we care enough to go and speak to share one with another? That is one way of spreading the Gospel.

How about to our neighbours, and to the people that we meet in the community, or people that we work with? Can we speak a word for God? How often does the name of God come out of our lips in praise or in testimony? Are we ashamed to speak of Him freely? We ought not to be ashamed to. We should readily speak of God

as we journey through this world and not something that is simply put on but something that is coming from the heart.

3) *Another expression of casualness is casualness about sin and personal holiness.* He says, “that thou art . . . blind, and naked” (Revelation 3:17). This is casualness about sin and personal holiness. He says, “buy of me . . . white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed” (Revelation 3:18). We can be casual about Scriptural obedience? If God condemns it, why try to justify it? If God commands it then we need to follow the example of Abraham and do it promptly, willingly, and cheerfully.

*We can have casualness about personal influence in relation to this matter about casualness about sin and personal holiness.* It is casualness about personal influence. Am I being a leaven in the body of Christ? Or, am I a “lively [stone]” [1 Peter 2:5]? It is the difference between being casual nor not.

4) *A fourth expression of casualness is casualness about our spiritual vision.* He says “that thou art . . . blind. . . I counsel thee to buy of me . . . eyesalve, that thou mayest see” (Revelation 3:17, 18). It casualness about loyalty to and appreciation for the church. We could raise the

question, “What else will lead our children into the world faster than a lack of appreciation for the church or loyalty to it?” It can be casualness about group direction of travel. For any congregation to be a spiritual house the members must be spiritual. For any congregation to be following Jesus Christ the members must be following Jesus Christ. We each have a part in that.

IV) *Let us think now in the fourth place of man’s reaping for casualness.* The title is *The Casualty of Casualness.* Revelation 3:16 says, “So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.” This is God speaking. That is really the casualty of casualness. There are the people who get all upset about their neighbour coming and testifying to them of the Lord. However, but there is more of that person spiritually than there is of the one who could not care less, it does not seem to matter to him one way or the other if you are a Christian or if you are not.

Have you ever thought of the idea of what you do with Jesus Christ? It does matter what we do with the Word of God. He will discover it too late. For you and I who read the Word of God and have heard it often this is cer-

tainly a warning “I will spue thee out of my mouth.” The judgment of God will fall.

I am trying to think of the language. I think it was the word *casual* that I understand on one occasion a brother was speaking to an individual. This man told him that he is a casual Christian. The brother asked him, “Do you realize that the Bible condemns casual Christianity?” I think he maybe used this Scripture to show him that. The result was that the man took it seriously and began to search the Scriptures in a different way from what he had been before. Whenever we begin to understand the facts in relation to casualness it will certainly help us to avoid the reaping that comes if we follow that path.

V) Let us notice now in the last place, *God’s remedy for casualness.* We will give a number of verses. Proverbs 4:23 says, “Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.” Luke 13:24 says, “Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.”

Matthew 11:12 says, “The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.” Jesus is saying here is that those who are willing to put a lot of effort into it are the ones who will succeed. “The violent

take it by force.” He is not speaking of physical violence. He is speaking of violence in a spiritual sense — there is a willingness to take some, shall we use the word “radical” — radical moves to stand for what is right. “The violent take it by force.”

It takes a good bit more than the average, we could even say the average Christian in North America puts into it, or the average person in Jesus’ day. Jesus said, “Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 5:20). The warning is for you and me.

Philippians 2:12 says, “Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.” Philippians 3:14 says, “I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.” 2 Peter 1:5 says, “And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and” so on. Giving all diligence, “For if ye do these things, ye shall never fall” (2 Peter 1:10). 1 Peter 5:8, 9 says, “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: Whom resist stedfast in the faith.”

Be vigilant. One who is vigilant is one who is watchful. I recall it said in a sermon one time

“Eternal vigilance is the price of safety.” I think that is well put. We cannot afford to be casual. What happens to the casual driver who goes down the road? He has time to watch what is happening beside the road? Tell me about it. It is easy. It is very easy to get off track, is it not? It can be very costly very quickly. Likewise also in the journey of life.

Romans 12:11 says, “Fervent in spirit; serving the Lord.” In Revelation 3:18 He says, “I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see.” God has a remedy for us. He has help for us to overcome. Colossians 1:27–29 says, “To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory: (28) Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus: (29) Whereunto I also labour, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily.” May that be our experience.

## The Snare of Casual Christianity

I invite your attention for a text verse to Amos 6. I would like to look at a subject that is, I will say, been growing on my mind for a number of weeks and months. I would like to share that message. Amos 6:1–6 says. “Woe to them that are at ease in Zion, and trust in the mountain of Samaria, which are named chief of the nations, to whom the house of Israel came! (2) Pass ye unto Calneh, and see; and from thence go ye to Hamath the great: then go down to Gath of the Philistines: be they better than these kingdoms? or their border greater than your border? (3) Ye that put far away the evil day, and cause the seat of violence to come near; (4) That lie upon beds of ivory, and stretch themselves upon their couches, and eat the lambs out of the flock, and the calves out of the midst of the stall; (5) That chant to the sound of the viol, and invent to themselves instruments of musick, like David; (6) That drink wine in bowls, and anoint themselves with the chief ointments: but they are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph.” I will hold further comment on that.

I would like you to turn now to 1 Peter 4:7, “But the end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore

sober, and watch unto prayer.” “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour” (1 Peter 5:8).

Turn now to Revelation 3:14–21. This passage brings into focus the Church that is in view. The Laodicean church had individuals who were neither cold nor hot. We know God’s attitude toward this relationship when one is neither cold nor hot.

Returning to Amos 6, we have in focus a group of people that are ease in Zion. That simply means they were secure in their situation and felt that everything was going well and wonderful and there was nothing really to get excited about. In 1 Peter 4:7 and 5:8, they were unaware. These groups of people in Amos 6 and in the church of Laodicea were a group of people that were not accounting the fact of an adversary that is intent on destroying them. “The end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer.”

I would like to look at thought of the snare of casual Christianity. We live in a day when the term “casual” characterizes almost a total scope of society. That is the day in which

we live. No one dresses up anymore to go away. Today the casual look and the casual purpose in life in general are viewed as the norm. Today, you will see signs on some church houses that they have contemporary worship one time and they will have regular worship at another time. You have referred to today as what we know as contemporary music and contemporary clothing.

We must also understand that not only has the casual look and attitude infiltrated society in general, but it has to a large degree become the approach to many in regard to their Christian walk of life. That is the challenge I would like to look at — the snare of casual Christianity. As we were thinking about the church in Laodicea there seems to be an increasing casual outlook in regards to spirituality in our day. Yes, to be a Christian is viewed as a good thing, but to really practice in complete detail the Scriptural requirements for holiness and separation is not all that necessary. After all, “God loves everyone and all who profess to be His children is all that is necessary, and really should we not enjoy life?” That is the attitude of so many today. Will God be so concerned about such small things as we will look at here

today? Let us remember being a Christian does involve direct conflict with the carnal will of man. Therefore, I must recognize that to walk in the Spirit will result in practical obedience to the Scripture that stands in a marked contrast to the casual Christian of our time.

It is important, brethren and sisters that we understand that to be a child of God today, is something that demands our all. It demands every effort that we can put into it. As I was thinking about this subject, let us suppose that you were at the Niagara River and you were upstream a little bit on a boat. As you were coming down that river, you saw a sign that said, “Danger Ahead,” relating to the falls. If you have ever stood at the Niagara Falls and saw that large mass of water coming down, why none of us want to go over that. You saw that sign ahead and it said, “Danger.” You need to do something. You need to get to change your course. Would you be very casual about what you are doing? Would you say, “Well, the water is smooth here, there really is no need to get excited. I will simply keep right on floating along.”

In a sense, as we think about spirituality, as we are moving along, it seems we are living in times when the water is smooth.

It is so easy to say, “I am a Christian.” However, at the end there are some realities to the course that we are on. Unless we pay attention to the signs, the water gets rough and there are rocks that we will face, and there is an accountability at the end. Therefore, it is important that we take our Christian life seriously and that we do not become casual in our approach to God. With the multiplicity of the voices that are around us today, it is a real snare that we need to be aware of. The pressures from the world around us do have a subtle effect and we must pay close attention to it in this our generation.

I will look now at a few areas. I) First, I would like to look at the Biblical view of Christianity. Then, we would like to look at II) some of the symptoms of casual Christianity. Then, III) the snare, and then, IV) the safeguards. Amos 6 relates to a group of people which were satisfied where they were. They were content enjoying this experience and were not grieved, it says, “for the affliction of Joseph.” They were not aware, were not concerned about the reproach that was happening to the people of God.

I) I would like to go to Acts 2, a very familiar passage and look at the Biblical view of Christianity. There are a number

of principles in Acts 2, which we must understand, before we look at a few other points that are shifting thoughts away from this pattern of the Biblical view of Christianity.

In Acts 2:38–47, we understand and know this is the passage where Peter preached on the day of Pentecost. We have the phrase in the end of verse 36 where Peter brought them to a decision point. Then, they raised a number of questions as some things which they can do to change their situation. There are a number of things that are what I call the Biblical view of Christianity.

1) *In Acts 2:38, the Biblical view of Christianity is that to be a Christian one must repent from sin and choose to follow the way of Christ.* That is nothing new but it is the Biblical view of Christianity. One must repent from sin and choose to follow the way of Christ. Verse 38 says, “Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized.” Repentance must be the experience of every individual to be a child of God. We must regularly teach this.

Jesus said in Matthew 16:24 “If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.” That is the outworking of following

the Lord. It is the pattern that is a part of true disciples of the Lord Jesus. It is laying down that which the flesh would lead us to and willingly subjecting ourselves unto the Lordship of Christ. Peter said that is the way that we will experience new life with Christ Jesus. It is by repentance, and then it is following the way of Christ.

The New Testament saints and the Anabaptists understood this fact very clearly. They understood that as they followed Christ and believed in His teaching that it worked itself out in very practical details. They understood Jesus' teaching in relation to non-resistance, they understood His teaching in relation to separation from the world and in relation to moral issues as it relates to divorce and remarriage. They were issues which they needed to live and practice to be a child of God.

2) *The Biblical view of Christianity is that the apostolic doctrines taught by the apostles is God's divine will for the Church.* Verse 42 says, "And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers." We cannot accept part of the Scripture and yet reject other parts of the Scripture and claim to be a child

of God. Paul said, "the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord" (1 Corinthians 14:37). We believe that the Scripture has final authority in all areas of life. To believe one part and to reject another part is to make us guilty of it all. We become guilty of rejecting all. Therefore, we must believe all the Scripture.

3) *In Acts 5:11 another Biblical view of Christianity is a reverential fear of God.* In Acts 5, when the sin of Ananias and Sapphira came into focus, when they dealt with this in verse 11 it says, "And great fear came upon all the church, and upon as many as heard these things." It is a reverential fear of God. It is a fear that moves to obedience. It is a fear that fears to disobey. It is a fear which understands that my eternal destiny hinges upon my obedience to the will and purpose of God. It is a fear that moves one to search out the Scriptural requirements for life, as to knowing why we do what we do. What is the essence of spirituality and Christianity? It is a reverential fear of God.

4) *We also notice in Acts 2:44-47 that there is a genuine brotherly love and concern for the spiritual well-being of the brotherhood.* There is a sharing and caring for, and a healthy con-

cern for each other. There is a sense of accountability for my influence upon the lives which my life touches. Let us understand that our spirituality, or lack of it, will, without fail, affect the lives of others. Therefore, my spiritual life has a large bearing on the effect of others.

5) *Another Biblical view of Christianity is that eternal life in glory is gained by a life of diligent perseverance.* Jesus said, “every man presseth into it” (Luke 16:16). Today, with all the mixture in regard to religious voices, we may be tempted to believe that it is not necessary to be so narrow minded. However, we may never forget that those who are truly the saints of God will be in the minority. It is the way it has always been, and it is the way it will be yet in our day. There is no middle road. Jesus said, “Ye cannot serve God and mammon” (Matthew 6:24; Luke 16:13). In Acts 2:1, 4 the Spirit of God was poured out upon them. When one is filled with the Spirit of God, there is a burning fire within that motivates and moves one into a close walk with Him. It enables him then to understand God’s view of the world, as one has the fire of God a part of our experience.

II) *Now, I would like to look at the symptoms of casual*

*Christianity.* What are some of the areas that this does touch? If you would look in the dictionary for the word, “casual” it simply means, “occurring without regularity, feeling or showing little concern, having an air of easy unconcern or indifference.” Then, it had this one word that I thought was very significant. It simply said, “cool.” Casual is cool. We hear a lot of that today. “Everything is cool.” That is casual.

Casual is also related to, and is designed for informal use. We see today the people who walk the towns, that walk the streets, you have them with the baggy trousers. It seems they are almost ready to fall off. We see caps on backwards, belts that are far too long, shoes in which the strings are hanging out. You also see them walking with them completely open. You see them walking, as I saw an individual sometime back, with a pair of flip flops on and his heels were completely out over the backside of them. How anyone could ever walk comfortably like that, I have no idea. Nevertheless, it is amazing how people will try to make themselves miserable to be in style. Then, it is nothing short of that.

That is the casual approach of today. Do not dress up for any-

thing. If you go to a meeting today (I am not thinking of a religious meeting) if it is a feed meeting or something of that nature (we do not go to a lot of them but occasionally you get to some of those) how do people dress? They do not dress up anymore. It was the practice of people in the past. Even business men were accustomed to wearing a tie. They do not anymore. They simply dress casually. “Come casual, however it best suits you.” It does not matter. That is what is in focus when we think about casual. That kind of an attitude then affects one’s mind set as it relates to Christianity and our view of God.

Let us look at some of the symptoms of casual Christianity. I have a number of things listed here that we will go quickly across. Then, I think it helps us to bring this into perspective, as we think about some of the symptoms of casual Christianity. I say this not because I feel that we as a group, as a church, are going down the road of casual Christianity. Rather, we understand that this pressure is facing us. We also understand that pressure faces us from within all of our life. We need to understand the fervency that is involved in serving the Lord. Possibly, we

could say that this thought of or the area of casual Christianity, is maybe one of those areas that is knocking at our doors very hard. We need to be aware and be on guard and not let ourselves decide that we somehow can become casual in our attitude toward God and still make it with Him.

1) *First of all, the symptom of casual Christianity is a general lack of the fear of God.* One finds it somewhat easy to be disobedient to authority. It is a general lack of the fear of God, or we could say a general lack of appreciation for authority. That all fits in here. One finds it somewhat easy to be disobedient to authority. I heard someone say some time back about an individual who said he was simply “sweetly disobedient.” A person is not unkind about the things he says but he is simply disobedient — “sweetly disobedient.” It is a general lack of the fear of God. That is a fear of God relating to authority to the state, to the Church, to parents, or even to one’s own conscience. It is a general lack of the fear of God.

One can go against their own conscience and it really does not matter. That is the snare of casual Christianity. A general lack of the fear of God. People who trample under what they have

been taught all their years, needed to do something with the teaching that their conscience moved them in. When they trample it under, it does something to their mind set.

2) Another symptom of casual Christianity is a general disinterest in spiritual matters. The Laodicean church was neither “cold nor hot” (Revelation 3:15). One does not get real excited about the Word or about spiritual conversation. One can speak freely about material issues or gardening, or may know all the different kind of cars, and dress material, but very little about the Scriptures. After all, what does it matter? Why all the fuss and excitement about Bible study? It is a general disinterest in spiritual matters.

Right along with this in an indifferent approach to worship. I will look at this in two ways. One finds worship service something that must be endured rather than anticipated. They become unable to really get involved and to sit up and take notice. It is one who takes an active interest in all the happenings outside the window or may whisper during prayer or pay special attention to a picture in one’s Bible. They may spend undue time trying to re-comb the little girl by your side. Or, they may find it easy to

slouch down and go to sleep rather than to follow along with the preaching of the Word. One may even find people chewing gum in church. It is one of the things that they enjoy doing. They may even find little time to be present a church outreach meetings, and things of that nature. It is simply a general disinterest, and indifference to the approach of worship. That is casual Christianity. We need to be aware that if we are finding ourselves in any of these areas it ought to be saying something about us and we ought to be paying attention to where we are.

We were looking at it in somewhat of a collective way. Let us bring it now into our personal worship. One does not get excited about reading and Bible praying — about reading the Bible and praying regularly. It is somewhat easy to neglect without feeling guilty for doing so. “After all, I have read it before.” Or, “I have heard someone else read it and really the Bible is not that interesting to me. I would rather read something more exciting.” That is a casual attitude about the Scripture. It is a casual attitude toward God and it finally affects our relationship to Him.

2) *Another symptom of casual Christianity is an unconcern for*

*maintaining distinctive lines of separation.* I will look at this first of all in one's appearance. It may find itself in shifting hair styles. One can see the part move up or down. One can see the hair grow long or cut extremely short. It could be seen in the shifting of the colour of the trousers that are worn. It could be seen in the shifting in the dress material — the large flowers or the gaudy material. It could be seen in the “jacked up” covering image or in the fancying up of the little children's clothes. It is the image of trying to fit in without bearing the stigma associated with living a practical separated life. It is not a willingness to bear the “reproach of Christ” (Hebrews 11:26; see also 1 Peter 4:14). That is a casual attitude. It is an unconcern for maintaining distinctive lines of separation.

It may also be seen in our choice of automobile styles and colours. — the sport image and the luxury look and things of that nature. It could be seen in our home furnishings — the plush look, the country image. It can be a general lack of Scriptural mottos replaced with all the types of scenery pictures and trinkets and things of that nature. The casual Christian is more concerned with fitting into society than identity as a child of God.

Therefore, one is quick to hide their identity as a plain Christian as much as possible, which finally affects our total way of life. That challenge I take to myself. I do not say that because I feel we are so far astray in that, but it is a challenge that faces us. We like to somehow fit in, and not be so distinctly different. Remember, the casual Christian is more concerned about fitting into society than in identifying as a child of God. That is a casual Christian.

3) *Another symptom is a lack of sobriety.* It is the “everything is funny” outlook. It is the inability to be serious or to discuss serious matters, relating to the thought in 1 Peter 5:8 which we were looking at. The Christian greeting is replaced with a slap on the back, or simply a handshake without involving oneself in the Christian salutation. It is a lack of sobriety. It is this idea of “Row, row, row your boat,” mentality. Everything is simply “We are simply here for a good time. Therefore, we will enjoy the time we are here,” and failing to realize that in this life we are moving from time to eternity.

In this lack of sobriety, I see it (we possibly all see it this way) sometimes it seen in the casual clothes. Sometimes it is even seen in the casual clothes that are

worn in the jackets of some a capella tapes. Have you ever seen that casual attitude, that casual mentality, the lack of sobriety, where you may see on the pictures an individual who is standing there with a shirt collar open? He may have a vest on. He may be standing at a fence and he may have boots on. He may even have his foot propped up on the fence. That is casual. That is a casual attitude. Brethren and sisters, when you look at a tape with that jacket, there is only one thing to do with it and that is leave it where it is. That kind of music from that kind of tape will do something to our thinking. Casual attitudes in those areas will affect our way of life.

4) *Another symptom of casual Christianity is when spiritual fervour overrides Biblical obedience.* Much of Christianity today is cloaked in spiritual fervour, but true Biblical obedience and discipleship have gone “down the drain” and are disregarded by further enlightenment. That is why we have seen the apostasy which has taken such a toll in our day today. It is because Church discipline has been replaced with spiritual fervour. Is spiritual fervour wrong? Should not we be spiritual people who know what it is to be a child of God and

should we not be talking about that? We ought to be, but let us understand that our spiritual relationship with God and church discipline go hand in hand. We cannot maintain church spirituality without church discipline.

I believe it was brother Jesse Neuenschwander who said a number of years ago (I am not sure if I can quote it exactly the way he said it). He said something like this in relation to spiritual fervour, Biblical obedience, and church discipline. “There is only one thing wrong with this concept that one can be spiritual without church discipline. The thing that is wrong with it is that it will not work.” It simply will not work, and it never does. It never has, and it never will. There is something in within our nature that is bent on making room for that which we want to do. Church discipline helps us to find our way in the midst of the pressures of life so that we can find a way that will lead us safely to God.

Without church discipline we will always choose in favour of the flesh. It will always be that way. What I want to do, I can be sure that the Spirit is telling me to do it. However, church discipline enables me to find a way with a spiritual group that is able to come to rest in issues that say

“If we will make it, here is where the line needs to be drawn.” It may not be where I have drawn it, but it will be a safe position for me, for my family, and for the Church. Therefore, we need church discipline to help us think right, and help us act right.

The pietistic thought patterns of our day, we need to be on guard against. That is when spiritual fervour overrides Biblical obedience. I know an individual whom I have not met for quite a while. I met at our store recently some of the people whom he has met. This individual, is one whom the first time I met him, was very outspoken in relation to spiritual things. In fact, I met him one day while unloading a load of wheat a number of years ago. He was a person who had a lot to say about the Lord Jesus. Before I left the flour mill, he came up to the side of the truck and wanted to pray with me.

A number of weeks after that (it may have even been a year, I am not sure) I was fuelling up one day and sure enough I saw him in the bay beside where I was filling and he noticed me and came over and stood there. He talked a little bit and before we separated, standing there in the fuel pump, he got a hold of my hands and said, “Brother let us pray, before we separate.” There

we prayed, right there at the fuel station. You know you were almost embarrassed. I was trying to decide if I should have been embarrassed or not.

Nevertheless, in that whole context as I left that scene, there was a man who showed little view of separation. From our standpoint there was really no sign of separation. He had a lot to say about the Lord. I did come to discover that he had thrown aside his teaching that he had been taught from a plain background. He had thrown that all aside and the people that he is touching today are the same way. They will come into the store and they will have a lot to say about the Lord, but there is nothing there in relation to separation.

It is right to talk about the Lord brothers and sisters. However, our life with the Lord must “line up” with the Scriptures if it will be valid. It simply must do that. I take a challenge from that. Maybe I am not as vocal as I ought to be. Nevertheless, whenever individuals become very vocal in their relationship to God and then are not following the full details of the Scripture, is it right for us to question where they are? We leave that in the hands of God, do we not? I am glad we are not the judges of all that. However, I know that to

serve God means that I must be obedient to what the Scripture says. We know that and therefore we must follow that.

IV) *What is the snare of casual Christianity?* 1) *The snare of casual Christianity is that God is reduced to the level of mankind.* That is one of the snares of casual Christianity. God is made to do what man wants Him to do. God is prayed to as if one is talking to a close friend. Have you ever noted, one of the things that often happens when people apostasize, What happens? Well, they pray to Jesus. “Dear Jesus this. Dear Jesus that.” That often is the result that comes along with apostasy. My question is this? Whom do we pray to? Whom do we pray through? We pray to God through Jesus and our prayers must be directed to God. Then, we conclude our prayers in Jesus’ name. We pray to God.

We see the snare of casual Christianity is that God is reduced to the level of humankind. He is not seen as a holy God. He is not seen as the judge of all. He is simply reduced to a “buddy” relationship. Therefore, people see God as one whom they can stand beside and He will be by their side. “He will do what I want Him to do.” He will have his cap on backwards the same as I do.”

“We are simply having a good time.” “We are simply bumping each other along.” They are laughing and making a joke of life. “After all God is simply a good friend of all of us.” That is one of the results of casual Christianity. Let us understand that God is the Supreme Authority over all and He stands as the Judge of the universe. He is the One who has outlined for us the way to live, the way to holiness. He is saying “This is the way that will get you into my presence. Therefore, you must live in full obedience to Me.” “This is the way, walk ye in it” (Isaiah 30:21). When we become casual in our Christian experience, God is reduced to the level of mankind.

2) *It subtly leads one away from the truth.* One is slowly and gradually led away from the centre without being fully aware of what is happening. King Solomon did not reject God overnight, did he? Lot did not suddenly choose the well-watered plains. Demas’ eye on the world gradually led him to love the world and to reject the Gospel. That did not happen overnight. Let us remember the devil does not care how he gets us into his camp. Be it ever so small and just so, he is moving us in his direction. That is all he

cares about. He does not care how he gets it done, as long as he gets us moving in his direction.

3) *Casual Christianity appeals to the flesh and yet tends to satisfy the conscience.* “No, I would not completely reject the Word, but really must we be so narrow minded? Must we be so narrow minded to be a Christian?” Have you ever heard that? Have you ever thought that? It gets quite close to us, does it not? However, casual Christianity appeals to the flesh and yet tends to satisfy the conscience. I will be a Christian. I will talk right, but there are a few areas where I will simply hide my identity a bit. I do not want to be so radical. It appeals to the flesh, yet tends to satisfy the conscience.

Do you remember the poem where the world and the Christian begin to walk hand in hand? I do not have that with me. I wish I had it to read it. Sometime, if you have access to that poem you ought to read it. Is it titled *The Church Walking With the World*. Very subtly, the devil came up to the Church, and began to whisper nice things into Her ear. Slowly the Church began to look at Her plain attire and feel that it was rather drab and she ought to do something about it. Slowly this change was made. Slowly another change

was made until eventually the Church was in the world. The challenge is with us. A small deviation here and a small deviation there will take us to the world. Therefore, we must be concerned about our relationship with God.

4) *Another snare of casual Christianity is that the trends and patterns of the world become less offensive.* What may have shocked one in the past, today is so normal that it is almost accepted as a standard rule of conduct. It seems with each passing year that the things of this world get worse. The thing that shocks me is that maybe that as things get worse what used to be so bad in the past, does not really seem so bad anymore. The trends and the patterns of the world become less offensive including the undress, the open shoes, and the attire in the world. Does it in anyway become less offensive to God? God still sees them the same, and we must see them the same.

5) *Another snare is that it robs one of spiritual vitality.* Christian victory over temptation becomes a greater challenge and defeat more sure. Why? It is because one is not finding satisfaction in sitting at the feet of the Master. Whenever I am not enjoying a relationship with the Lord as I ought to, when I am

becoming casual in my attitude toward Him, then spiritual vitality will be lost in my relationship with Him.

6) *One loses sight of our real mission in the world.* We become caught up in the pressures of making a living and forget why we are here. In Acts 4:19, 20 Peter said, when they were called into question why they were doing these things, “Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.” When one becomes casual in their Christian experience, one loses sight of our real mission here. The fire of God is extinguished in our experience and we really have no testimony to share for what the Lord means to us.

7) *Finally, casual Christianity causes one to become indifferent to personal accountability.* One becomes careless in regard to their relationship with God. When we come to that point where we really do not care about our relationship to God, we are on very dangerous ground. We ought to be concerned brothers and sisters, where we are in relation to God. We dare not be casual in that attitude. The devil is not casual, is he? The devil is not casual. He puts out a lot of

ways to try to cause us to stumble and fall. If the devil is not casual, then we dare not be casual in our rejecting of those temptations and in our walk with God.

IV) *In conclusion, what are the safeguards in avoiding casual Christianity?* I have four that I will share with you which came to my mind — the safeguards in avoiding casual Christianity. We want to be a child of God, alive, vibrant, serving Him faithfully and have the hope of eternal life. We all want that. It is a very simple formula to safeguard this pattern or to safeguard from casual Christianity from overtaking us. 1) *The first one in focus is by keeping our personal relationship with God intact.* That is number one. We must keep our personal relationship to God intact. We must take time for personal Bible study.

Along with that, as we think about the reading of the Scripture, I am thinking also of staying current in working with failures. We do not go through life and not make any mistakes. The concern that we ought to think about is, what do I do when I stumble and fall? Do I take care of it? Do I stay current in addressing failure? When I stay current with them, then I maintain my relationship with God. We think about David and some

of the sins that he was involved with. The Bible says that David was a man after God's own heart. Why could God say that? It was because David dealt with the failure. We must do the same.

Let us keep our relationship with God. Let us take time for personal Bible study. We are busy. We "hit the ground running" it seems, every day. However, are we taking time to meet God. What is more important in our experience, meeting God or getting all the work done? What should be more important in our life?

2) *Another safeguard is maintaining a proper view of the world and God's attitude toward the world's attractions.* 1 John 2:15 says, "Love not the world," very simply, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." Therefore, we safeguard ourselves in this attitude by maintaining a proper attitude toward the world and God's attitude toward the world's attractions.

3) *We also safeguard this casual Christianity by keeping a healthy view of the Church.* Do you love the Church? Do you love the brotherhood? Do you love a church that gives you some direction in life? Do you love a brotherhood that whenever you

sidestep someone comes and makes you aware of that? We ought to thank the Lord for that. We ought to love the brotherhood, because we need that to make it to glory.

4) *We safeguard ourselves in avoiding casual Christianity by understanding that the road to glory is not an easy path.* Rather, it is one of travail and diligent perseverance. We do not simply "coast" into glory. Jesus said that everyone who enters into the kingdom "presseth into it" (Luke 16:16). I thought about in the Hebrew writer, in Hebrews 11 those individuals that gave their all into serving the Lord. Compare the saints of Hebrews 11 with the present outlook in modern Christianity today, you know, those who were on the rack, they were stretched, sawn asunder, the Bible says. Will a casual Christian go to the rack and allow someone else to place him there? I do not think so. Will a casual Christian who is unwilling to identify with God today, be willing to stand at gunpoint for his faith? I do not think so? We must understand that the heroes of faith and the Anabaptists understood that being a Christian involved conflict and involved a marked identity with God. Many were ready to lay their life at risk or lay it down.

I thought about the man Dirk Willems, whom we hear about, who was fleeing from the authorities and went across thin ice. His captor fell in. If he was a casual Christian what would he have done? Would he have laughed within his heart and said, "Serves him right," and kept on going? That is what a casual Christian would have done. The child of God has a burning message within his heart. When he looked back and saw that if this individual died and where he would be for eternity, it did something to his relationship with that individual. He went back out across that thin ice, and he got that individual and he brought him back over and showed him the way of salvation. Then, he finally needed to die for his faith.

The challenge that rests with me is, Am I a child of God to the point that I would be willing to go to the stake for my master? Am I a casual Christian or am I a child of God through and through? Am I identifying with Him? If I cannot identify with God today when it is easy to identify with Him, how would I identify with Him, if persecution ever comes our way?

In North America we live in fairly easy times, do we not? Maybe the devil has won more to his camp in the easiness of our day than in the times of persecu-

tion. We do not pray for persecution. We are glad for our day. Nevertheless, it behooves us that in the "smooth sailing" of our day to remember that there is a reckoning day somewhere. As I thought about the illustration of the Niagara Falls River again. We must understand that while we are experiencing a relationship with the Lord and enjoy being with Him, are we not also needing to understand that there is an undercurrent pool that is ever taking us closer to the falls? We need to be standing in that boat with our oars pulling all of our efforts, rowing upstream, because if we do not put all of our effort in, we find ourselves drifting and drifting away from the truth.

The challenge I would like to leave with us in conclusion, is there any area in my life that I am unwilling to surrender to God? Is there any area in my life where I have become a bit casual and relaxed in? Am I a fervent child of God? Jesus said, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me" (Matthew 16:24). Did Jesus casually go to the cross? No, the Scriptures say "he stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem" (Luke 9:51). He moved with a purpose. We must move with the same purpose, and

attitude of heart. We must remember that we are facing an enemy that is intent on destroying us. Let us keep our Christian life intact brothers and sisters, so that when life is over we can be with

Him for all of eternity. May God help us to be faithful. Let us implore the throne of grace daily so that we be victorious in this day in which we live.

### Scripture References

	<b>Job</b>	16:13	89	3:1, 2	73
23:12	80	16:16	89, 98	3:4, 5	73
	<b>Proverbs</b>		<b>John</b>	<b>Hebrews</b>	
4:23	83	12:24	81	11:26	81, 92
	<b>Isaiah</b>		<b>Acts</b>	<b>1 Peter</b>	
30:21	95	2:1, 4	89	2:5	82
55:1	78	2:38	87	4:7	85
55:2	78	2:38–47	87	4:14	81, 92
	<b>Jeremiah</b>	2:42	88	5:8	85, 92
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	<b>Ezekiel</b>	5:11	88	1:10	84
16:49	77	9:2	76		<b>1 John</b>
	<b>Amos</b>		<b>Romans</b>	2:15	98
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	<b>Luke</b>		<b>Colossians</b>		
9:51	99	1:27–29	84		
13:24	83		<b>2 Timothy</b>		

### From the Previous Issue:

#### The Preservative Nature of Scriptural Fellowship Lines

From a message by John K. Plett

Spring 1986

Ministerial Fellowship Meeting

Location unknown

**Book Reprint** *(continued)*  
**The Seven Laws of Teaching**

CHAPTER V  
**THE LAW OF THE LESSON** *(continued)*

**Mistakes and Violations**

The wide scope of this Law of the Lesson affords opportunity for many mistakes and violations. Among the more common are the following:

(1) It is not unusual for teachers to set their pupils to studying new lessons, or even new subjects, for which they are inadequately prepared or not prepared at all, either by previous study or by experience.

(2) Many teachers neglect entirely to ascertain carefully the pupils' equipment with which to begin the subject.

(3) A common error is the failure to connect the new lessons with those that have gone before in such a way that the pupils can carry over what they know or have learned into the new field. Many individual lessons and recitations are treated as if each were independent of all the others.

(4) Oftentimes past acquisitions are considered goods stored away, instead of instruments for further use.

(5) Too often elementary facts and definitions are not made thoroughly familiar.

(6) Every step is not always thoroughly understood before the next is attempted.

(7) Some teachers err in assigning lessons or exercises that are too long for the powers of the pupils, or for their time, making impossible an adequate mastery of principles that may be needful for future progress in the subject.

(8) Teachers frequently fail to place their pupils in the attitude of discoverers. Children should learn to use what they have already been taught in the discovery of new facts or principles and in the solution of new problems.

(9) A common fault is the failure to show the connections between parts of the subject that have been taught and those that are yet to come.

As a consequence of these and other violations of the law, much teaching is poor, and its benefits, if any, are fleeting. People are found to have inadequate knowledge and to lack the power of studying for themselves. This is as true of Biblical knowledge as of any other. Instead of a related whole, a concept with one purpose, the Bible is viewed as scat-

tering parts, like bits of broken glass, and its effect is many times only to puzzle and confuse; it is

never seen as a connected whole, as it should be.

## **Youth Book Reprint** *(continued)* **Judith**

### I

#### HAPPY DAYS OF CHILDHOOD *The Beloved Daughter (continued)*

All old Hebrew customs were kept sacred and observed diligently in the home of the Weinbergs. The father usually told his eagerly listening daughters during the Passover celebration of the significance of the feast for the Jews. He related how in ancient times their forefathers had been slaves of a cruel, merciless tyrant—Pharaoh, the Egyptian king. He described very vividly how in a memorable night, the night of watching, the Jews, every family surrounded by their children, had eaten for the first time the Passover lamb with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. It all was done according to the commandment of the blessed Jehovah and under the direction of the most notable man of God, Moses. All was in readiness for the journey as the meal was eaten in haste. Their loins had to be girded, their staffs in their hands, and the bags on their shoulders. That very night the angel of death flew over Egypt,

destroying all firstborn from the son of Pharaoh even to the son of the last slave. He told that God had commanded Israel after they had been freed from the Egyptian slavery, to celebrate the feast of the Passover every year on the fourteenth of Nisan throughout all generations as a memorial of this great and glorious event.

Having listened very intently, Judith suddenly interrupted her father: “Daddy, why did the angel kill the Egyptian children only? Were the Jewish children better than those of the Egyptians?”

“Yes, my child,” replied Mr. Weinberg, somewhat confused by such a question. “The children of the Jews were better in the eyes of Jehovah than the Egyptian children. As a matter of fact, all Jews were better than the Egyptians. That’s why God chose the Jews to be His people, that they might serve Him, the true God. All other nations, the Egyptians included, worshipped dead idols, which is hateful to

God.”

“What are idols, Papa?” continued curious little Judith, her inquisitive eyes fixed upon her father.

“It seems you want to know all things at once, my child,” he said with a smile.

“Yes, Daddy, I want to know all, and you are going to tell us, aren’t you? Please, Papa, dear. You are so good and do know everything.”

“Yes, yes, Daddy you are good,” the other two joined. “Tell us what are idols; we want to know.”

“An idol, my children, is something men love more than God, which is being worshipped like God. But we are told by Jehovah through our blessed prophets to love the Lord God with all our heart and soul. The Egyptians had many idols. They worshipped the sun, the big bull-Apis, the crocodile. The river Nile was sacred to them, and they bowed before many other things.

“Papa, but if I love you and Mamma more than God, is that wrong, too?”

“O Judith, you ask so many queer questions that is impossible to answer them all at once. Perhaps I shall do it another time. But now listen how God punished these Egyptian idolaters while He helped the Jews

because they loved Him and prayed to Him only.

Mr. Weinberg continued to tell the Bible narrative about the departure of the Israelites from Egypt, illustrating it skilfully with various legends from the Talmud and national traditions. Listening attentively, Judith broke in with another question: “Father, why had the Jews to kill and eat the little lamb in that night? Why did they kill it? The little lambs are cute. Oh, how cruel are the people! I would never kill a lamb, and you wouldn’t either, would you, Daddy?”

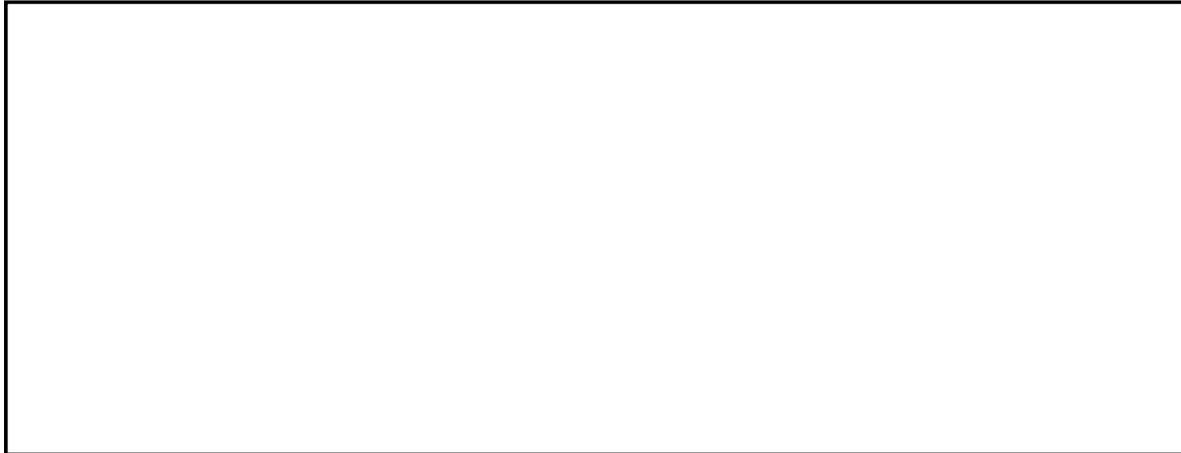
“My dear Judith,” replied Mr. Weinberg laughingly; “in one evening you want to become like your grandfather, a wise rabbi. It is impossible to learn all at once.”

“Why, yes, I want to know all, and especially why the Jews had to kill a lamb at that time.”

“All right, I am going to send you and your mother again to your grandfather in the country this coming summer. There you may ask him all the questions you want to about your lamb and anything else that interests you. He knows all and can explain everything to you.

At this promise of their father, the faces of all three girls shone with joy. “To Grandpa, to Grandpa!” they shouted in merriment.

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