



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 Proactive Christian

We are all, if we are honest with ourselves, in a battle for moral freedom. I trust that we are winning that battle. I find, in my life it is an ongoing battle. It is not a battle which we fight one time and then we are never bothered again. If we stay close to God, we can find victory and grace to overcome. Proactive is a word I have seen, but have never given it a lot of thought. There are three subtopics with regard to

the proactive Christian. 1) His/her personal life, 2) Relating to controversial issues, 3) Facing decisions in the church.

A few dictionaries did not even give a definition of the word 'proactive.' It gave the word 'active' of course and they also gave the prefix 'pro.' There were a few that also gave the word 'proactive.' The thought that I gleaned of the burden of this topic was the prefix 'pro' from

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the Latin language has the thought of forward. This is one of the meanings. There are a few others. One common word that we all think of is 'progress' or 'progrès'— the verb or the noun depending upon how we use it, begins with the letters pro. We think of progress or progressive as moving forward. This is the thought of pro. Many of the words that begin with the word 'pro,' give the thought of looking ahead, something in the future, or

a goal. It is moving forward, or ahead of something. As we think of the proactive Christian, I basically summarized it this way in my own words, "Being active with the future in focus," or "Acting in favour of something."

To help us understand it, I would also like to look at the opposite. There is another prefix. We will think back to the word progress again. Can we think of the opposite of progress? It is "regress." 'Re' is a prefix that

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means back or has the thought of backward. Pro has the thought of forward, re has the thought of backward. Thus, as I considered being proactive, I considered an opposite to perhaps help us understand something that we are more acquainted with, or hear more often, which is being “reactive.” I would like to consider both, as we go through this topic, we will be doing a lot of contrasting with being either reactive or proactive. I hope this can help us understand what we are talking about.

Reactive is the thought of being active with the past in focus. If we react to something, it is something that has already taken place. We seldom, if ever, react to something that is in the future. Reaction is re-acting again, or acting in opposition to something rather than acting in favour of something. I have a number of statements as I meditated and thought of being a proactive Christian that I would like to share to begin with. *The proactive Christian is goal oriented.* In other words, he is moving toward something. The reactive Christian is moving away from something. This would not have to be a Christian, but the burden of this message is to Christians. We want to be careful not to get too radical and think

that if we find ourselves lacking or that we are reactive, that we are not a Christian, or maybe we think we are proactive and we think everyone who is reactive is way off and is not even a Christian. We are talking about tendencies and areas that we need to grow and develop in. We are not talking about people who are either children of God or not — people that are saved or lost — if we want to put it that way. I would like for us to remember that because we are human enough that we have these tendencies to work with, in life.

Some of us tend to be more reactive than others. Some may be more proactive than others. These are our natural tendencies. However, in general man tends to be reactive rather than proactive. The proactive Christian knows what he wants. The reactive knows only what he does not want. One of our older bishops shared a little story with me one time that always stuck with me. It is so true as we look at people in general, as we look at ourselves, and as we face situations. There was a little boy who was running full speed one day, down the street and turned the corner. He ran into the policeman. The policeman caught him, stopped him, and said, “Where are you going sonny?” The little boy

replied, “I don’t know where I’s a goin’, all I knows is where I’s comin’ from.” That story stuck with me and I want to leave it with you. I would like to think of it different times as we continue.

I have seen people who have left situations, and it seems like they are not sure where they are going. They do know where they are coming from, and they base decisions on reactions in their life. Their life, rather than being a straight line, is more of a zigzag or a back and forth and maybe even a regression, as they are bounced back and forth to one side and another. I do not believe that is what God has for us as Christians. Sometimes we find ourselves doing that. God would have us not to be blown about with every “wind of doctrine,” but to become stable. (Ephesians 4:14)

My prayer is that this message God would inspire and help us in being stable. We will be sharing some things that maybe proactive Christians do, or do not do. However, I am more concerned that we consider, and are concerned in what we are becoming rather than in only what we are doing. I have known a few young men who have had trouble in being able to come through instruction class and church membership. It seemed they

were willing to do whatever they were told and yet it did not seem like the Holy Spirit was what was motivating their life. It is important what we do. What we do is a product of what we are. We need to be able to help someone see what God wants us to become, and what needs to be the motivating factor in our lives. Being a Christian is more than doing the right things, it is in being what God has for us.

I would like to encourage us along that line as well, not to take these as a lot of do’s and don’ts, but to allow God to work this in our lives. We are not only human beings, we are human becoming. God has a work in our lives that begins when we give our hearts to Him. It does not end until He takes us home. We do well to recognize that.

One example of proactive people (proactive Christians we could call them) would be Nehemiah. As we think of their personal life, we would like to look at Nehemiah, glean a few thoughts, and see a picture of him and his personal life. I also want to look at the New Testament example of the apostle Paul. I would like to glean one thought from the life of Christ as well. As we think of the personal life of the pro-active Christian, one of the first things that stands out

to me as we look at Nehemiah and study his life, as far as his personal life, he spent time with God. Nehemiah was a man of prayer.

In Nehemiah 1, one of the brethren came and shared with Nehemiah what was happening in Jerusalem. In verse 4 it says, “And it came to pass, when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept, and mourned certain days, and fasted, and prayed before the God of heaven.” He prayed. He was a man of prayer. He took time with God. If we want to be a proactive Christian, or if we are one, we need to spend time, or are spending time, with God in prayer. Nehemiah’s weeping, mourning, and fasting, shows his earnestness. *The proactive Christian is one who is serious with God.* He does not take his life lightly. When we see someone who seems to know how to handle situations, who seems to have wise counsel, and is someone whom we respect, I believe that we can be assured that there is a secret life with God that is probably above average. We need to strive for that. We need to spend time with God.

Along with that, I believe Nehemiah experienced a personal relationship with God. There are numerous verses like

Nehemiah 2:8b, “And the king granted me, according to the good hand of my God upon me.” He refers to “my God.” In verse 18 he refers to “my God,” again. There are other Scriptures where he says, “our God.” Nehemiah knew God personally and spent time with God. As leaders in the church we should seriously consider this message. We need to be examples of being proactive Christians first of all. Yet, it is also a message for each brother and sister to be proactive.

Nehemiah spent time with God and knew God. We also see this in the life of Paul. Paul wrote a lot about spending time “night and day,” (1 Thessalonians 3:10; 1 Timothy 5:5; 2 Timothy 1:3) in prayer and “pray[ing] always” (1 Thessalonians 1:11; Colossians 1:3) for a lot of people. Paul also spent time writing and encouraging the brethren. How are we as leaders? Are we leading our people toward godliness? Or, are we spending time trying to drive them away from worldliness? This is the kind of thing we are talking about. We might say, “We cannot let our people go into the world.” I believe this is right. There is a difference in taking “reactive measures” or “proactive measures.” This is what our focus is here.

How are we as leaders? Do we know God? We cannot lead our people where we have not gone. If we have not learned to spend time with God, to know God, and to understand His plan that He has for the Church, we cannot lead our people into it. We might stand between the Church and the world and try to keep driving our people away from the world, but we will only add to the confusion. We need to lead our people toward godliness. That will at times include safeguarding from the world. What is our motivating factor and focus?

The proactive Christian has a servant heart. Another area of personal life that stood out to me in both Nehemiah and Paul was, they had a servant heart. We notice this in Nehemiah 1:6, 7 “Let thine ear now be attentive, and thine eyes open, that thou mayest hear the prayer of thy servant, which I pray before thee now, day and night, for the children of Israel thy servants, and confess the sins of the children of Israel, which we have sinned against thee: both I and my father’s house have sinned. We have dealt very corruptly against thee, and have not kept the commandments, nor the statutes, nor the judgments, which thou commandedst thy servant Moses.” Nehemiah used the phrase, or

thought of himself as the servant of God. He said, “thy servant.” We see this in Paul’s life. I believe, we will see it in every proactive Christian’s life. We also see this in the life of Christ.

As we think of the servant heart and being “labourers together with God,” (1 Corinthians 3:9) or being active in the Kingdom of God. To be successful in the Kingdom of God, it is not so much that we try to get our point across or the way that we think things, but it is spending time with God and understanding what God has for His Church, and then working in cooperation with God. In order to do that, we need a servant heart. Isaiah 42:1–4 is a prophecy of Christ and it is very rich. In fact a message could be preached on these first four verses. I would especially like to notice verse 4.

“Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon him: he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles. He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street. A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench: he shall bring forth judgment unto truth. He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in

the earth: and the isles shall wait for his law.” If we will chart our own course or push our agenda, we will fail and become discouraged. It is only as we see ourselves as servants of God, work in cooperation with God, understand His purposes and what He is working, and we cooperate with that, then we are co-labourers with God and we do not need to be discouraged because we will not fail because God does not fail. We need a servant heart. We need to seek the will of the Master and understand what He has for us. Because of Jesus’ faith in the Master, He could minister to His people for the time that He did. Finally, He was rejected and even killed of them.

The proactive Christian identifies with his brethren. We notice this in Nehemiah and in Paul’s life. Nehemiah confessed the sins of Israel in Nehemiah 1:6, 7, “which we have sinned against thee: both I and my father’s house have sinned. We have dealt very corruptly against thee, and have not kept the commandments, nor the statutes, nor the judgments, which thou commandedst thy servant Moses.” The proactive Christian will identify with his brethren. He will not hold himself or herself on a pedestal and say, “You need to get up here where I am.” Or,

“If you have it, if you are not up here where I am you are not quite making it.” I do not believe that Nehemiah was a sinful man. He seemed to be a man of God who spent time in prayer and had a burden for his people, yet he identified with them. He did not hold himself above them. We notice how that Paul, throughout his writings at times, identified with his people.

The proactive Christian works while others rest. Another thing that we see was that Nehemiah worked while others slept. This would go along with the thought of the life of knowing God. When we see someone who we consider to be proactive, someone who is successful in his Christian life, or seems to know where he is going, he may be working while you are sleeping. Notice in Nehemiah 2:12–16, “And I arose in the night, I and some few men with me; neither told I any man what my God had put in my heart to do at Jerusalem: neither was there any beast with me, save the beast that I rode upon. And I went out by night by the gate of the valley, even before the dragon well, and to the dung port, and viewed the walls of Jerusalem, which were broken down, and the gates thereof were consumed with fire. Then I went on to the gate of the

fountain, and to the king's pool: but there was no place for the beast that was under me to pass. Then went I up in the night by the brook, and viewed the wall, and turned back, and entered by the gate of the valley, and so returned. And the rulers knew not whither I went, or what I did; neither had I as yet told it to the Jews, nor to the priests, nor to the nobles, nor to the rulers, nor to the rest that did the work." Nehemiah spent time at night to view the walls.

I do not know if I can explain why Nehemiah was so inspirational to his brethren, but it really stands out to us as we see that. In verses 17, 18 after he viewed these things at night and made his approach, he did not say much. He only said to them, "Ye see the distress that we are in, how Jerusalem lieth waste, and the gates thereof are burned with fire: come, and let us build up the wall of Jerusalem, that we be no more a reproach. Then I told them of the hand of my God which was good upon me; as also the king's words that he had spoken unto me." This was all he told them. What was their response? "And they said, Let us rise up and build. So they strengthened their hands for this good work." There is a lot behind the scenes that we do not

really know about. I was blessed as I thought about that and studied through the book of Nehemiah with that in mind. What made Nehemiah so inspirational? He did not have to get his whip out and drive the people to work. He did not have to have a big long speech or pep talk every day. It seemed like he was in there with them. Somehow he inspired them to build the wall. It was largely his personal life, the time he spent with God, and the time that he put into the work.

As we read about Paul in the New Testament, it would also seem that he was at times weary with the care of the churches. He spent time praying while others were resting. He was working. In 1 Thessalonians 2:9, he says he worked "night and day" so that he would not be dependent upon them. He was an example to them. As we view Nehemiah and Paul, we are inspired by their lives. We sort of like to be that way too. We can, but it is not easy. It takes a lot of work. We need to press on.

The proactive Christian is goal oriented. We notice that Paul and Nehemiah both were goal oriented. I believe we all understand that Nehemiah's goal was to build the wall around Jerusalem. If we stop and think about all the things they faced — the hin-

drances — Nehemiah did not let those things dissuade him from reaching his goal. They were slowed down, but he never quit. In fact, when the enemy threatened to attack, he armed half the men, and the other half had their swords girded at their side, but they did not quit building the wall.

It was the same way with Paul. As we think of and look at the life of Paul, we can see this testimony. This principle, this part of his life shone through. “Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 3:13, 14) Paul was reaching forward. He was moving toward a goal. He was not being driven from something in his past. He was inspired by something in the future that he looked forward to. Nehemiah was the same way. He was inspired with the thought of building the wall and completing the work that God had given him.

The proactive Christian is a disciplined person. We see this in the life of Paul, but we do not read it in Nehemiah. I would tend to believe that Nehemiah

was also a disciplined person. They practiced self-discipline. Paul, in 1 Corinthians 9:25–27 mentions that. The proactive Christian is a disciplined person. “And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a cast-away.” Part of the inspirational power of Paul was his self-discipline. If we cannot discipline ourselves, we are not ready to lead others. I believe it was a philosopher who said, whether Socrates or another, “If you want to move the world, you must first move yourself.” That is somewhat a carnal statement, but there is a lot of truth in it. The proactive Christian has learned to rule himself, and to rule his own body, and to discipline himself. Then he can become an inspiration to lead others.

The proactive Christian relating to controversial issues. When we think of controversial issues, it takes at least two sides to have a controversy. Controversial issues are issues where there is not an agreement.

How does the proactive Christian relate to these? First of all, the proactive Christian will prayerfully consider the issue at hand. We notice this in Nehemiah especially. This was the first thing he did. The proactive Christian has a goal and his goal of building the Church and working together with God and his brethren. We all need that goal. When relating to controversial issues we need to keep that goal in mind. We want to build the church. We want to work together with God and with our brethren to build the Church. This is why I say, first of all, we need to prayerfully consider the issue, because there are some issues that the proactive Christian will take a side on, and there are some issues that he will refuse to take a side on.

A number of these next observations and statements are thoughts from what I meditated. They are not taken from the Scripture as such. I stand open for correction if they are not right. *If the issue is a principle, the proactive Christian will side with God and with brethren who are willing to obey God at any cost.* He realizes that dropping a principle will be destructive to the church. Remember the proactive Christian's goal is to build the church. He is a builder in the Kingdom of God, and he

is looking out for the welfare of the Church. His goal is to be a co-labourer with God. Thus, if the issue is a principle, he will side with God. He will take sides with the Scriptures and with brethren who are willing to obey God at any cost. There are times when the proactive Christian will take sides and needs to take sides. It is generally when there is a principle at stake. He realizes that if he loses this principle it will be destructive to the Church.

On the other hand, if the issue only involves the application of the principle, I believe the proactive Christian will refuse to take sides. He will seek rather, to inspire his brethren to think together, because he understands that if he will take sides, he will destroy the church. As I thought of reaction, my mind went to nuclear reactors. I do not know a lot about nuclear energy. I understand that they take atoms, which are the smallest particles basically that matter is made of and they split them. When they split an atom, the two halves that they get do not weigh quite as much anymore as the one that they split. What is left over in that, has been changed from matter to energy. The amount of power that is in that is tremendous. I am not sure how big the

atomic bomb was. The uranium itself inside the bomb that leveled over a five-mile radius in Japan was not very much. That is the power of the nuclear reactors. Reaction is a powerful motivator. A lot of destruction is wrought through reaction, when sides are taken. People do things out of reaction rather than being proactive. Thus, the proactive will refuse to take sides if the issue is simply an application of a principle.

I believe there are probably more splits and divisions in the Mennonite churches from applications, than there are from principles in our own circle of churches we might say. As we look at the past in the Mennonite church, there were some splits and divisions that involved principles. Men stood with God, with His Word, and with their brethren. This is important and right. Sometimes in our church life, we ‘split atoms,’ we might say, and we have nuclear reaction within the church that is not really necessary. It really is not God’s will because we take sides on the application rather than seeking to think together with our brethren toward a goal.

Let us take the doctrine of separation for an example. If we are in a congregation and are having a controversy whether the people

of God should be separate from the world or not, or whether they should blend in, the proactive will side with God and the Scripture and the other brethren who believe that the people of God are a separate people. This is a principle. This is the Word of God. However, if the controversy is how we will express that separation, he will be very slow, if he will even take sides. We have different thoughts, some would have it a little bit more radical, usually we use the terms of liberal and conservative. We may be quite quick to think we need to jump on one side or the other. Do we have to? Is there a third option? What about that of following God, and trying to inspire our brethren to think toward a goal? What do we want in the end? Then we think together toward that.

The church at Corinth had some problems including some division. Paul had to correct them a little bit in chapter 3. Some of them said, “I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ.” (1 Corinthians 1:12 see also 3:4) They were having divisions about things that they should not have. At the same time they were not making a division where they should have and that was the man in chapter 5 who was in fornica-

tion. He said, "You have not made the division you should have." Thus, they were dividing over things that they should not have. He called them "carnal," (1 Corinthians 3:4) and immature. The proactive will study, and prayerfully consider the issue, and decide whether there needs to be a division or not. Sometimes there needs to be a division. Sometimes there needs to be encouragement to come together.

Reaction divides. Reactors insist that their view is accurate, or that their opinion is right. I would like to use a little illustration to help us understand what we are looking at as we think of reaction, being reactive, or being proactive. When we have a controversial issue, usually we have two sides. When there is reaction, we are usually opposing each other. The proactive, if there are two sides, will consider the end goal that they want and they will think toward that. They will decide together how that God would have us reach that. This is what I speak about. I hope with those that simple illustration will give you a picture of what I speak talking about.

Another thing the proactive realizes and understands, is his need to be balanced by fellow believers. Proactive Christians

think together, they realize that "I of myself, do not have everything." I would like to use another example to illustrate that. The Bible talks of the Church as a body. God has given us two eyes. If we were to draw a circle on a distant board, or focus on a distant object, and hold our finger up, one finger in front of our face and focus on the circle, as we align our finger in front of the circle, while keeping both eyes open, how many fingers do we see? Two. Are there two there? No, there is only one. We could spend a lot of time to try to decide which is the right finger. When we close one eye, the one shows up. If we close the other one, it jumps over to the other side.

Why did God give us two eyes? We could say, "It is simply confusing. We do not know which finger is the right one." However, try putting a patch over one eye and go through life with one eye. We would have a blind side that you did not before. We could not judge depth right, or have proper perception. Our perception is messed up. God gave us two eyes for a reason. I believe God gave people in the Church different visions for a reason as well. However, God only gave us one mouth. There are a number of Scriptures,

which say we should “all speak the same thing.” (1 Corinthians 1:10) I do not know of a Scripture which says, “we all need to see things alike.” The proactive Christian understands that. He recognizes that without the other eye, he is handicapped in life. He will appreciate the other brethren’s vision. As we focus those together toward our goal then things become clear. This is what God would have for the body of Christ.

As we think of controversial issues, those who react, destroy relationships. The proactive build relationships. Also, as we think of acting with the future in mind, is it quite short sighted to change relationships with our brethren for our opinions. It takes sound doctrine and healthy relationships for the Church to prosper. The proactive understand that compromising or emphasizing one at the expense of the other will hinder the church. There is a lot in that if we want to consider it. We cannot only emphasize relationships and let sound doctrine slip. On the other hand we can emphasize sound doctrine and let relationships slip. The proactive Christian does not compromise or emphasize one at the expense of the other, but rather they seek for a balance with both. If we

look through the New Testament (I have never actually done this but in thinking in a general way) it seems like there is as much, or possibly more, said about relationships in the Church, than there is about sound doctrine. They are both there, and I would say they are both of equal importance. However, let us remember that we are shortchanging quite a bit if we react with our brethren in controversial issues in a way that we cut off relationships for not thinking ahead very far, we might say. We are not acting with the future in mind.

Sometimes there are controversial issues where the ministry do not feel the same as the laity. It is important that the ministry are examples in being proactive. If the congregation’s view differs from the ministry’s view, we need to give respect and consideration for their view. We can squash that and say, “God has called us to lead the church.” The ministry can try to jam things down their throats and say, “You have to do it this way.” If we do this we will lose the relationship. We can choose to react to situations. The ministry may see something in the congregation that we do not appreciate, and react to it and then bounce way over on the other side, rather than together thinking toward the

goal that we want and working toward it together.

It could also be person to person conflict or two parties within the church. Perhaps the church is somewhat divided; some think one way and some another way. We believe the road to heaven is strait and narrow, but on the other hand, to so think that what I believe is the only way, especially when we are talking about application, we need to be careful with that. We need to give proper respect and appreciation to other applications.

The proactive Christian facing decisions in the Church. What is motivating me? The church is facing some decision. This is a good question to ask ourselves. Am I pressing forward toward a goal or am I being driven? There is a big difference. If my decisions are based on, and motivated by reaction, I will probably choose an opposite extreme. This is simply a natural law that when there is a force applied one direction or hits something, there is an equal amount of force in the other direction. When we see the church is ready for decision and we look at something and we base our decision on reacting to what we do not like, we probably will get over in the other ditch. I say there is a good likelihood. It is often easier to agree on what

we do not want than to agree on what we want. We need to define goals so that we can move toward them. This takes communication. It does reach a goal when we only see things from the thought, "We do not want this," and so we do something to fight it. Then another thing comes and we do not want that either. What do we want? It is our place as leaders to have goals, to know God, to understand what He wants for the Church, and to lead our people in a way that we can strive together to reach that, rather than simply reacting to a lot of things that we do not want.

Reaction produces more reaction. Leaders should be an example of being proactive. We should seldom, if ever, motivate our people by a reaction. This is easy to do sometimes, especially if we think of liberalism. We may think of other groups that we would consider more liberal, and we do not want to do what they are doing. Therefore, we say a lot of negative things about them and we try to motivate our people to where we want them to go by reacting to this over here. This is somewhat a carnal approach. Should we not rather hold out a mark that we are pressing toward, and inspire our people toward godliness, rather than trying to chase them from

the world?

I thought of two goals in relation to this message as I thought of being proactive. I believe this would be our desire. I would like for us to consider these goals as we think of controversial issues and church decisions and base our decisions on reaching these goals, rather than reacting to what we do not want. A Scriptural church is where brethren love and appreciate each other. I believe this is our heart's cry. It is where we strive together toward common goals, we feel safe with our family and feel comfortable to invite others who are seeking after God. There could be more added, but that in a few words would be a desire or a goal that I would feel I would want for the congregation that I am a part of. When the decisions that need to be made are controversial issues, I keep this goal in mind and work with that. I trust God can help us.

Then I thought on a little wider scale with the number of churches that are represented in reading this. It would also be my goal that we would have a church constituency where we feel comfortable to share mission visions, to serve in each other's churches, to intermarry, and to enjoy each other's fellowship. These are things that we face in our inter-

congregational relationship. It would be my goal that we would have a constituency where we could feel comfortable to do that. So, how do I, in the decisions I face, even in our own congregation, consider what is appreciated by other churches? Or, do I say, "That is not their business." Perhaps we see maybe one church that we think is a little more plain or conservative and we react to that. We decide we want to go a different direction and we do not want that. Thus, we make a decision to be way out here on the other side.

2 Timothy 4 gives Paul's testimony at the end of his life. This can be the testimony of each one of us as we allow God to work in our lives to help us to take a proactive approach in church life and the Christian life. As Paul looked back, I do not believe he saw a lot of zigzags and bouncing back and forth. This is not the picture I see. In 2 Timothy 4:6-8, as Paul looked back and reflected on his life he said, "For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but

unto all them also that love his appearing.”

Scripture References

Nehemiah	1:12	35	1 Thessalonians	
1:4	29	35, 36	1:11	29
1:6, 7	30, 31	30	2:9	32
2:8b	29	9:25–27	3:10	29
2:12–16	31	Ephesians	1 Timothy	
2:17, 18	32	4:14	5:5	29
Isaiah	Philippians	2 Timothy		
42:1–4	30	3:13, 14	1:3	29
1 Corinthians	Colossians	4:6–8	39	
1:10	37	1:3	29	

From the Previous Issue:

A Biblical Basis For Church Standards

From a message by Glenn Sensenig
Sunday, December 01, 1996
California

Book Reprint (Continued)

One Hundred Lessons In Bible Study

LESSON 5.

Our Lord’s Miracles.

1.

Miracle: Turning Water into Wine.

Year of Our Lord’s Ministry: 1

Locality: Cana.

References: John 2:1–11.

Immediate Effect: Strengthened the Faith of His disciples

Lessons for Us: There is no want too small for Jesus to notice. We need Jesus in the minor details of life.

2.

Miracle: Healing the nobleman’s son.

Year of Our Lord’s Ministry: 1

Locality: Cana.

References: John 4:46–53.

Immediate Effect: The nobleman and his whole house believed.

Lessons for Us: A clear evidence of God’s power usually convinces those who are not Gospel-hardened.

3.

Miracle: Draught of fishes.

Year of Our Lord’s Ministry: 1

Locality: Bethsaida.

References: Luke 5:3–11.

Immediate Effect: They forsook all and followed Jesus.

Lessons for Us: It always pays to obey Jesus. We should not be too timid about launching out after perishing souls.

4.

Miracle: Cleansing the leper.

Year of Our Lord’s Ministry: 1

Locality: Gennesaret

References: Matthew 8:2, 3; Mark 1:40–44; Luke 5:12, 13.

Immediate Effect: An immediate cleansing. The fame of Jesus spread

Lessons for Us: Jesus has compassion on the unfortunate. God has power to cure all diseases.

5.

Miracle: Peter’s wife’s mother and others healed.

Year of Our Lord’s Ministry: 1

Locality: Capernaum.

References: Matthew 8:14–17; Mark 1:30–34; Luke 4:38–41.

Immediate Effect: Peter’s wife’s mother ministered unto them. The devil silenced.

Lessons for Us: Converts should begin work immediately after conversion. When God has possession of the heart the devil is bound out.

6.

Miracle: Stilling the tempest.

Year of Our Lord’s Ministry: 1

Locality: Sea of Galilee

References: Matthew 8:23–27; Mark 4:35–41; Luke 8:22–25.

Immediate Effect: The men marvelled and sought to learn more of Jesus.

Lessons for Us: “The earth is the Lord’s” (Exodus 9:29b; Psalm 24:1).

7.

Miracle: Legion of devils entering the swine.

Year of Our Lord’s Ministry: 1

Locality: Gadara

References: Matthew 8:28–34; Mark 5:1–20; Luke 8:26–39.

Immediate Effect: Christ implored to leave the country.

Lessons for Us: When the power of God is made manifest, we should invite Him to dwell in our hearts instead of leaving us.

8.

Miracle: Healing one sick of the palsy.

Year of Our Lord’s Ministry: 1

Locality: Capernaum.

References: Matthew 9:1–8; Mark 2:1–13; Luke 5:18–26.

Immediate Effect: The Pharisees mocked and the multitude glorified God.

Lessons for Us: Four men, intent on bringing others to Christ, working harmoniously, can accomplish great things. — *Moody.* The self-righteous man is the last to be convinced by real truth.

9.

Miracle: Curing a woman of bloody issue.

Year of Our Lord’s Ministry: 1

Locality: Gennesaret.

References: Matthew 9:20–22; Mark 5:25–34; Luke 8:43–48.

Immediate Effect: Cured as a result of faith.

Lessons for Us: Jesus is willing to give virtue but wants it acknowledged. “Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith” (Romans 3:28).

10.

Miracle: Raising of Jairus’ daughter.

Year of Our Lord’s Ministry: 1

Locality: Capernaum

References: Matthew 9:18, 19, 23–26; Mark 5:22–24, 35–43.

Immediate Effect: The fame of Jesus increased.

Lessons for Us: “I am the resurrection” (John 11:25). Death is but

“sleep.” It is a blessed thing to fall “asleep in Jesus.”

11.

Miracle: Healing of two blind men.

Year of Our Lord's Ministry: 1

Locality: Capernaum.

References: Matthew 9:27–31.

Immediate Effect: Eyes opened in consequence of faith, and fame of Jesus spread.

Lessons for Us: “Ask and ye shall receive” (John 16:24). If sinners believe, Jesus will cure them of spiritual blindness.

12.

Miracle: Centurion's servant healed.

Year of Our Lord's Ministry: 2

Locality: Capernaum.

References: Matthew 8:5–13; Luke 7:1–10.

Immediate Effect: An immediate cure.

Lessons for Us: Faith is a living power.

13.

Miracle: Healing of the dumb man.

Year of Our Lord's Ministry: 2

Locality:

References: Matthew 9:32, 33; Luke 11:14.

Immediate Effect: Multitudes marvelled.

Lessons for Us: When the devil is removed from our hearts, we can then speak of heart experiences.

14.

Miracle: Healing of a man both dumb and blind.

Year of Our Lord's Ministry: 2

Locality:

References: Matthew 12:22, 23

Immediate Effect: People were convinced, the Pharisees blasphemed, and Christ spoke of blasphemy against the Holy Ghost.

Lessons for Us: There is danger of speaking lightly of the manifestation of the power of God.

15.

Miracle: Healing of the multitudes.

Year of Our Lord's Ministry: 2

Locality:

References: Matthew 12:15; 15:30, 31; 19:2; Luke 6:19.

Immediate Effect: Multitudes wondered and glorified God.

Lessons for Us: There is no limit to God's healing power.

16.

Miracle: Feeding the five thousand.

Year of Our Lord's Ministry: 2

Locality: Bethsaida.

References: Matthew 14:15–22; Mark 6:35–44; Luke 9:12–17; John 6:1–14.

Immediate Effect: A confession that Jesus is the true prophet.

Lessons for Us: In the kingdom of heaven there is bread enough and to spare. Gather in the multitude.

17.

Miracle: Walking on the sea.

Year of Our Lord's Ministry: 2

Locality: Sea of Galilee

References: Matthew 14:22–33; Mark 6:47–51; John 6:16–21.

Immediate Effect: They that were in the ship worshipped Jesus, and confessed Him to be the Son of God.

Lessons for Us: When walking on life's fitful sea, we should ever take courage in the thought that Jesus can keep us from all harm.

18.

Miracle: Healing of those who touched the hem of His garment.

Year of Our Lord's Ministry: 2

Locality: Gennesaret.

References: Matthew 14:36; Mark 3:10.

Immediate Effect: "As many as touched him were made perfectly whole."

Lessons for Us: There is no danger as long as we remain in touch with Jesus.

19.

Miracle: Healing of the man with a withered hand.

Year of Our Lord's Ministry: 2

Locality: Capernaum.

References: Matthew 12:9–13; Mark 3:1–5; Luke 6:6–10.

Immediate Effect: The Pharisees were put to silence. They conspire to take the life of Jesus.

Lessons for Us: It is lawful to do good on the Sabbath. to overcome a hypocrite makes him furious.

20.

Miracle: Raising the widow's son.

Year of Our Lord's Ministry: 2

Locality: Nain

References: Luke 7:11–16.

Immediate Effect: Fear came upon all and they glorified God. John sends an inquiry to Jesus.

Lessons for Us: A simple touch of our Redeemer turns fears of grief to tears of joy.

21.

Miracle: Healing the impotent man.

Year of Our Lord's Ministry: 2

Locality: Jerusalem.

References: John 5:1–9

Immediate Effect: Jews persecute Jesus. Christ proves His identity.

Lessons for Us: Some men will “strain at a gnat and swallow a camel” (Matthew 23:24).

1. What is a miracle?
2. Which miracle impresses you most as to the divinity of Christ? As a sympathizer? As a Saviour?
3. Was it in accordance with the law of the land to heal on the Sabbath?
4. Why did Christ not enter the Centurion's house to heal his servant?
5. Why did the people of Gadara pray Jesus to leave their coasts? (Matthew 8:34).

FIFTY FUNDAMENTAL FACTS

27. **The Holy Ghost leads Christian people “into all truth.”**

This is a companion thought to that of obedience; for God gives His Spirit, our Comforter and Guide, “to them that obey him” (Acts 5:32), It is the promise of Christ that “when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth” (John 16:13). And the more fully we commit ourselves to Him the more rapidly and completely we will be led into the truth and the light of God and His Word. Let no one get the idea that following after the Spirit is possible without obedience to Christ the Head of the Church, the Giver of the Gospel, the Author of our eternal salvation, This is what Christ says on this point: “But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you” (John 14:26). Follow after the Spirit, and you will be led into the Gospel light, “into all truth.”

28. **Prayer is an essential part of Christian life and service.**

In the language of the poet, “Prayer is the Christian’s vital

breath.” Not only are we exhorted frequently to pray, not only does the Bible give us a number of positive assurances that God will both hear and answer the prayer of faith, but the Bible is absolutely without comforting promises to the prayerless professor. As well think of the natural man living without breathing as to think of the child of God continuing to live spiritually without prayer. You never saw a mighty man of God who was not also a mighty man of prayer. “Men ought always to pray, and not to faint” (Luke 18:1). “I will therefore that men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting” (1 Timothy 2:8). If you would enjoy favor and power with God and safety in His service, then “pray without ceasing.”

29. **There can be no escape from sin and its results except through repentance.**

Christ has specifically declared that “Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish” (Luke 13:3, 5). And because “all have sinned and come short of the glory of God,” it is therefore imperative that “repentance and remission of sins should be preached among all nations” (Luke 24:47). As there are no

acceptable substitutes for salvation, neither are there any acceptable substitutes for repentance. A single sin in the soul, unrepented of, is enough to bar any one out of heaven. The sinner in the Church is as guilty before God as is the sinner out of the Church. Simon the sorcerer, though he had professed conversion and had been baptized, still gave evidence that he was still “in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity” (Acts 8:23). Sin becomes all the more heinous when it is committed in the face of better light. Matthew 11:20–23. There is an urgent need, at the present time, for more emphatic teaching along the line of two much-neglected themes: (1) Scriptural testimony against sin; (2) the necessity of true evangelical repentance.

30. **The new birth is a prime essential to entrance into the Kingdom of heaven.**

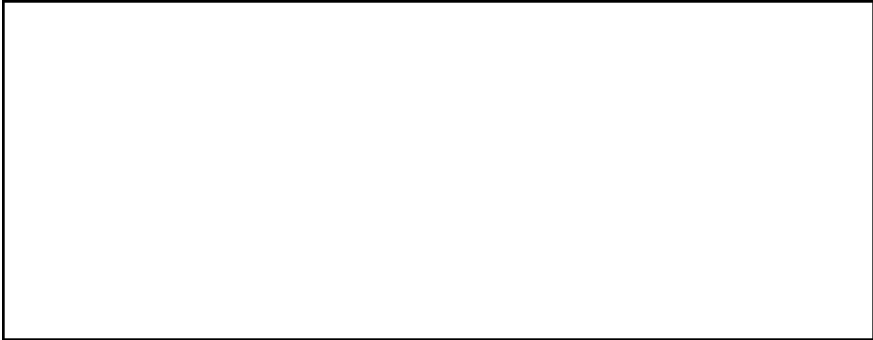
Christ told Nicodemus, and us,

“Except a man be born again, he can not see the kingdom of God” (John 3:3, 5, 7). Paul, writing to the Galatians, gives voice to the same truth, saying, “In Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature” (Galatians 6:15). “Child of the devil,” is an expression used in Scripture a number of times when reference is made to the rejecters of the Gospel of Christ. To be transferred to the family of God it becomes necessary to be born anew. Church membership, as noted in a preceding paragraph, is both right and essential to acceptable standing before God; but mere membership in any church, however worthy, is no acceptable substitute for regeneration. We do not become Christians by virtue of uniting with some church, but we unite with the Church by virtue of becoming Christians. Read Titus 3:3–7.

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And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things — 1 Corinthians 9:25.



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