



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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Developing Habits In Light of Eternity

The title of the message is “Developing Habits In Light of Eternity.” When we think of habits, what is a habit? I found in looking in the dictionary it has more to it than I realize. However, for the purpose of the message, we would like to consider the word habit as meaning “an involuntary tendency to act in a certain manner, usually acquired by frequent repetition.” A habit is something we acquire

by doing often. Usually it is involuntary. In other words, it is something that simply happens. It is something that we have done often enough that it comes automatically.

The dictionary gave several examples of habits. One example was the habit of fault finding. Faultfinding is a bad habit that is easy to get into. Something happens, and in every situation the first thing that comes to our

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minds is to find fault. What went wrong? What is wrong with this person? What is wrong with that person? Sunday morning after the service, what is the subject of conversation? Everything that went wrong in the service that morning. "Everything went wrong in the service this evening." That is the habit of fault finding.

It is something which we are not born with, but it is something that we develop. Habits are

something that we develop. We are not born with them but we develop them. On the same hand, habits are something that we need to correct sometimes.

When we think of things in light of eternity, the phrase "in light of," means "an awareness of," or "considering." *Therefore, we would like to think of developing habits with an awareness of eternity, or considering the fact that eternity is sure and that someday we will all face eternity.*

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Some people believe that if you are good and you die you go to heaven. If you are bad, you will simply die like a dog — you are buried, put in the ground and that is the end of it. However, we believe the Scripture teaches that eternity is for the good as well as for the bad. What we do in this life not only affects our destination in eternity but it affects those around us.

Our habits, whether they are good or bad do have an effect on those around us and on those to whom we relate, especially thinking of parents, employers, or those who have people working for them. Our habits do affect others. I think back to when I was a teenager and worked for the neighbour. I picked up his habits. I found that I did the things he did when I was at home. I did not realize that I did it. We can ask the question, “What things, or what habits do we express in our life? What habits are our children picking up from us?” What habits are younger people picking up from us?

“Why do we develop habits with an awareness of eternity?” Why is it important that we consider eternity with the habits we develop? Jeremiah 13:23 reads, “Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots?

then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil.” I do not believe this verse is speaking primarily to a child or one who is approaching teenage years (one who has not yet reached the age of accountability). Rather, it refers more to one who has made it their practice to always go against that which is right. (Maybe not in every area, but in some areas). In thinking of the Ethiopian (as I would understand it) they are a dark-skinned race of people. Perhaps we can think of those from Africa — those who are dark in their skin. We could ask the question, “Do you think that they could ever change their skin?” Is it possible?

Many white (Caucasian) people try to make their skin brown. I understand that many dark-skinned people try to make their skin white, but can it be done? Can “the leopard [change] his spots?” We think of a leopard as a spotted cat. Is it possible for that animal to change its spots, or to put on a zebra’s coat, or to look like a Holstein cow? We would say it is impossible. The prophet then continues by giving the comparison to those who feel “Someday I will change my life. For now, I am here to live for myself. This habit does not really matter, I am young. It does not matter. My children are young

they do not know any better. It is okay. Someday I will change.”

I recall to mind when I was a young boy, possibly not yet a teenager. One of the young sisters in our congregation was planning to marry a young man outside the church. This young man was addicted to tobacco. He had a problem with smoking. I remember his father at one event (we had a “shower” for them) asking his son “Son, when will you give up smoking? When will you do it?” “Well, father someday I will.” To my knowledge he still smokes today.

We go back to this verse here, “then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil.” For us to feel that “Someday I will change my life. Someday I will reform. Someday I will do what my parents want me to do. But, for now I am living for myself,” that someday may never come. Yes, the Lord continues to plead. The Lord continues to call. We will never change as long as we feel “Someday. Someday I can make the change. Someday I can do it.” Samson thought “I will go out as at other times before” (Judges 16:20), but the day came that he could not get out. Many people find that. They wish they could but they cannot. It has become such a part of them that they cannot.

As we think of eternity, how are we affecting those around us by taking the attitude that someday I will change but not today? This is the same as the attitude of a young boy who says “If I could only have one more cookie. One more will satisfy then I will stop. Then, I will say I am full. Then I will say I have had enough. Just one more.” If we cannot stop now, will we will stop then? Eternity is sure.

As we think of habits, how habits are formed, and how they become a part of us, I thought of when I was a boy. We used to see different times in the fence row that a tree would grow up and the fence would be fastened to the tree. In time, as that tree grew bigger, eventually the tree grew right around the fence. The wire went through the tree. It was a part of it. How did you get it out? You could not get it out because it had become a part of it. That is the way habits are. Habits are such that they become a part of us. If we develop bad habits, they become a part of us that is very hard to change, hard to correct, and easy to restore. Good habits are easy to lose and hard to restore. Therefore, let us be careful.

In Jeremiah 22:21 we have the prophet speaking again. “I spake unto thee in thy prosperity; but

thou saidst, I will not hear. This hath been thy manner from thy youth, that thou obeyedst not my voice.” Here, we could say this is God speaking to his people through the prophet. We could say that this sounds like a wayward son — a wayward man. Yet, I believe, we all have that tendency within us to do it our way, in our time, the way we decide, and the way we feel. “I spake unto thee in thy prosperity.” It is a snare that we all face, when we prosper, to take our eyes off God and to feel “We have made it. We have done it.”

God gave a warning to His people that when they would enter into Canaan and everything would be going good for them and they would be in houses that they did not build, their vineyards and olive trees would be doing so well, “Then beware lest thou forget the LORD” (Deuteronomy 6:12). Here was a case where in prosperity the Lord spake to them. The reply was “I will not hear.” “I will not listen. I am enjoying where I am.” “This hath been thy manner from thy youth, that thou obeyedst not my voice.” We could say that is a deplorable state. It is a warning to us as parents.

As parents, our responsibility is to teach our children prompt obedience when they are very

young. Here the Scripture says, “This hath been thy manner from thy youth.” They must do as they are told and do it when they are told. They need to form that habit in them such that when they are told to do something they do it. If we do not teach them when they are young, how do we accomplish it when they are older? It is a habit that they develop, “I will do it in my time. I will do it when I get around to it.” Then we have a situation like here where it is much easier to do what we want, when we want, how we want rather than when God wants us to do it.

Sometimes it can be habitual for us as parents to tell our children and then turn our back. Or, we tell them, and tell them again, and tell them again, and tell them again, and tell them again. It is a habit that we form. However, as we consider eternity, what are we doing if we develop that habit of simply always telling, and telling, and telling, but never expecting? When they become a youth and God calls them, how can we expect them to respond any better to the Lord than they do to us as parents when they are little?

As we think of verse 21, we would like to realize, and have it in our mind that a bad habit that is allowed, regardless of how

small we think the “bad” is, will carry us away from God. We have not made it to eternity yet, but when we get to eternity there will be no coming back. We will be there. There will be no opportunity to change the things that we have done in this life. The bad habit will carry us away a little further, and a little further, and a little further. It is like the words of a hymn we sing about how that our love for God is often so cool. It can become a habit to simply brush over our devotional life — the time we spend with God reading our Bible and speaking to Him in prayer, because we do not have time. “I am busy. I am late. I slept in. I cannot.” It becomes a habit to always excuse it because of some other reason. Then, we become lukewarm. We become cool. Little by little we drift away from the Lord.

We are all bound for eternity. Hebrews 9:27, 28 are verses that we need to consider. It has been used often, and yet it is a truth that we need to never forget. “And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: (28) So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.” This verse brings out the

fact of the sureness that it is appointed unto men to die. It also brings out the fact of the sureness that judgment will fall upon sin, and upon the sinner. However, equally as sure as death and judgment are upon sin, so also is the provision for redemption from sin. As sure as judgment will come upon sin so Christ was offered to take away our sin. Provision was made so that we can be justified and redeemed.

I believe we can read in here that provisions are made such that if we do develop bad habits they can be corrected. God is faithful and He will help us. However it is much better to take care of those when they are small and to develop good habits. As we think of habits that are formed, we consider these two verses that death is sure. Someday life will be no more. Someday that chapter will close in our life. What are we doing to draw us closer to God? What are we doing to point others to Christ? How are we helping those around us? We would say the phrase in the latter part of verse 28 refers to those who are born again, and have had their heart washed in Jesus’ blood. Their sins are washed away and they are continuing to walk with God.

We would also like to consider, for the sake of the message that there are habits which we can develop that will help us to look for the return of our Lord. Are we concentrating on developing those habits, and curbing the habits that would draw us away from God, or would tend to steer our children or our fellow men away from God, or that would make it difficult for them?

Let us look at Ecclesiastes 12. In this portion, I think back to the young man I referred to at the start and his bad habit. How many people come to the end of their life still holding on to the bad habits they developed when they were youth? I remember my mother telling me as a teenager, “David, you be careful. That is a habit that is not a good habit. You need to correct it because as you get older it becomes worse.” That is the way it works. If we allow a bad habit to develop when we are little, it becomes worse as we grow older. This is something for us to consider. The easiest time to correct a bad habit is when we are young and when it is small. That is also the best time to develop good habits, such that they can grow with us.

Ecclesiastes 12:1–7 says, “Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the

evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them; (2) While the sun, or the light, or the moon, or the stars, be not darkened, nor the clouds return after the rain: (3) In the day when the keepers of the house shall tremble, and the strong men shall bow themselves, and the grinders cease because they are few, and those that look out of the windows be darkened, (4) And the doors shall be shut in the streets, when the sound of the grinding is low, and he shall rise up at the voice of the bird, and all the daughters of musick shall be brought low; (5) Also when they shall be afraid of that which is high, and fears shall be in the way, and the almond tree shall flourish, and the grasshopper shall be a burden, and desire shall fail: because man goeth to his long home, and the mourners go about the streets: (6) Or ever the silver cord be loosed, or the golden bowl be broken, or the pitcher be broken at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern. (7) Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.”

We consider that this passage refers primarily to a person in the later years of life when the body is failing. The teeth are gone. The eyesight is dim. The hearing

is poor. The least little thing bothers them. Verse 5 speaks about going to the grave. “man goeth to his long home,” referring to the grave. Verse 1 says, “Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth” — when we are young. “while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them.” I recall different times older people saying “What is the point. I am too old now.” How many young people have said, “Well, when I get older then I will serve the Lord. When I get older then I will change this habit. When I get older then I will do different.”

We could think of people of the world who would say, “When I get older then I will stop going to the tavern. Then, I will stop going out with the fellows, and I will stay home, but not right now.” Yet the Scripture says, “Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth.” The time will come when there will be no desire anymore to make a change in life. The time will come when they say, “What is the point. I am too old. My life is spent. I cannot do anything anymore. My energy is gone. My desire is gone. I do not have the will power anymore to change my life. I do not have the desire.” That is, I feel, what we read in

this portion here. When it comes to developing habits, let us consider the fact that eternity is sure. *The day will come when we do not desire to make any changes because our energy is gone.* The desire to change is gone and we feel there is no point anymore. There is no will. It is all gone. Therefore, let us be careful now while we can.

Let us also consider the fact that we pass our habits onto others. We influence others — those who are around us, whether it is our children, fellow workers, or those in church with us. We do pass our habits onto others, and often it is a bad habit. That is more easily picked up than a good habit. It is a lot easier to remember a silly joke than it is to remember what our brother had for devotions before service. It works that way. That is the nature of man.

We develop habits in light of eternity because I am responsible for my soul. God has given me an eternal soul, and I have a responsibility to look after it. It depends on my choices. I recall younger people used to say, “I was predestinated. I was predestinated to go to heaven, and so it does not matter what happens this was predestinated for me.” Some people feel “This is my lot and so it does not matter what I

do, how I do, I am sure to go to heaven.” However, some people have the opposite problem. They try to excuse their failures by saying “I guess I was predestined to go to hell. The Lord never intended me to go to heaven. That is why I have all the struggles in my spiritual life that I do. That is why I just cannot live a life of victory. It is because I was predestined this way. I guess I will go to hell. What is the point in trying?”

We need to realize that God gave me a soul and it is my responsibility what I do with that. It is my responsibility to heed the voice of the Lord to respond to His speaking, to take the Word of God and apply it to my daily life. Proverbs 16:31–33 are verses that are always used at a time of ordination when the lot is used. “The hoary head is a crown of glory, if it be found in the way of righteousness. (32) He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city. (33) The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the LORD.” We can say that if we look at verse 31, the hoary head would be referring to the head of the elderly. It is a blessing to see older people who are faithful, who are continuing to walk with

God, and who continue to have a vibrant testimony for the Lord. How do we have that except that is a part of us through all of life. How can we feel that we can go through life doing it our way and then at the end of life, we will make a change, and then we will live for and have a vibrant testimony for the Lord, but, “for now I am living for myself.” Let us start early in life.

As we think of verse 32 there are times when it is habitual to lose control when something goes wrong. For some people it is habitual for foul words to come out of the mouth when something does not go right. We might be shingling a roof and we hit our finger or thumb. What happens? Some people say, “Well, I could not help it. It simply happened and I could not help what I said.” However, it is habit that has developed. It is a habit to always have something to say every time something goes wrong. Here it says, “he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city.” “He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty.”

Sometimes we feel, “If I could do some great deed that would be worth being noted for.” However, developing a habit of meekly accepting things when they go wrong is of far greater importance than to have our

name in *The Guinness Book of Records*. Always having something to say when something goes wrong is a bad habit that we develop and we need to correct it. God will help us if we commit it to him and desire to do it.

Verse 33 then says, "The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the LORD." The word disposing means, "the verdict, the sentence, the arranging, or the directing." We need to consider that the Lord arranges the circumstances of life. In saying this we are not detracting from this being used in the time of ordination because we feel it is the very same. However, it refers to more than the time of ordination. The Lord arranges the circumstances of life. Can we consider that when we are shingling the roof and that hammer hits our thumb that the Lord arranged that? The Scripture says, "The lot is cast into the lap." The Lord arranged it. He put it in my lap and what will I do with it? Will I lose control because my best dish broke? Will I spout out words that are not fit to hear because something went wrong? The Lord arranged it, but it is in my lap to do with it what I will.

What habits have I developed to help me in a situation like that? Remember that we are consider-

ing eternity. We are also considering how we are influencing those around us. I remember one time this very situation happened while shingling the roof in December and it was cold. One young boy who was on the roof did hit his thumb and he hit it hard enough that the blood flowed out. There was another man helping and directing. He was not a Christian man but he made the comment later, "How could that young boy have said nothing when he hit his thumb hard enough to draw blood." It spoke to him.

What habits are we developing to help us through? "The lot is cast into the lap." God arranges the circumstances. He has given us an eternal soul, but it is for us to take care of it. It is for us to come through those situations in a way that is pleasing to Him.

Psalms 119:109 says, "My soul is continually in my hand: yet do I not forget thy law." The psalmist recognizes the fact that his soul is in his hand. "I have it in my control. God has given it to me and what I do with it will determine where I will be in eternity. He also says here in relation to the responsibility for our soul that we must always remember His law. Will we always remember His Word and then allow it to help us in relating to the situa-

tions in life and to help us to develop habits that are good that will help us through those unexpected situations? It is not proper for us to excuse wrong doing because I did not expect it or that it happened suddenly. "I was not prepared for it." God is willing to help us such that we do not need to go back and say, "I am sorry" for whatever outburst we made because we can develop habits that will help us through those times.

We develop habits in light of eternity because of the souls who follow me. We need to consider that there are those who follow us as parents. We have children who are looking up to us. Older brothers and sisters have younger ones who are looking up to them. As an employer, we have employees who are looking up to us. We have fellow workmen who are looking up to us. We could come into the church as a Sunday School teacher, and we have little children looking up to us. In summer Bible school there are little children looking up to us. How are we affecting them?

In Philippians 4:9 the apostle Paul says, "Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you." Many times I have read over that verse and

never fully realized what was in it. When we read that verse again can we take that verse and turn it right into our own face and say the same thing? Could I tell my children the same thing? Could I tell my fellow brothers and sisters the same thing? "What you have seen me do you do the same. . ." "and the God of peace shall be with you." That is what the apostle Paul said. This verse stands a challenge before each of us, can we say the same thing?

In Philippians 3:17 Paul says, "Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample." His encouragement is to be "followers of me." Can we say that? Can we tell those who are following us that it is safe to follow me in everything I do? Everything that I do is safe for you to pattern after, and God be with you if you do? It is a challenge for us. We develop habits in light of eternity and it is important that we consider that.

In Philippians 4:13 and 14 the apostle says, "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, (14) I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." He states his

outlook in life. I appreciate how he says in verse 13 that he does not consider himself to have made it there. Some people have made the statement “I have reached such a point in grace now where I will never be tempted. I will never fall.” It is not too long until they are on the road downhill — on a downhill slide. Paul however, realizes the need to continue to press forward and the need to continue to press onward. If we are struggling in an area, maybe it is a bad habit we need to correct.

Maybe it is another area in life that we are struggling to have victory over, and finally we reach a point where we say “now I have conquered it.” Let us be careful. If we feel that way and do not realize that we need to keep pressing on, we will soon lose the victory. We will soon be struggling as hard as we were before. It happens. Paul says, “I press toward the mark” — “I need to keep pressing on. I need to keep looking to the Lord.” Since he had that desire and purpose of heart he was able to say then in verse 17, “be followers together of me.” Also, he was able to say in 4:9, “Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do.” Why? It was because he continued to look to God, to continue to

walk with Him, and to continue to press onward with him.

As we think of developing habits in light of eternity our focus needs to be on the Lord Himself to continue. It is said of Jesus, “Who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame” (Hebrews 12:2). Are we looking beyond and considering eternity when we allow habits and develop habits?

You might say, “Well, maybe we should not develop any habits.” Yet, there is a place for habits in our life. We could also think of habits as routine. There is a place for having done something often enough that it is habitual. It does save time. I realize that not everyone is a farmer. Not everyone works with cattle. However, if we always clean up our boots before we leave the barn, we do not have as much work to do in the house. It is a habit that we can develop that saves time. If we always put our tools away when we are done a job, it saves time. We develop a habit of putting our tools away or we develop a habit of simply setting them there when we did the job and later we come and try to find them and we cannot find them. Habits serve a place in our lives and they do save time.

In considering bad habits,

what is the cause of bad habits. We said at the first that bad habits are not something we are simply born with. Good habits are not something we are born with. Why is it that some people have bad habits and other people have good habits? It seems like “I cannot help it. I have this bad habit. He easily has good habits.” Why is it this way? What is the cause of bad habits? Perhaps there is more than this, but two causes I have written down are 1) neglecting to read God’s Word, 2) neglecting to obey God’s Word. Why else do we develop bad habits? We could say, “Well, that is not necessarily a bad habit for me to go into the house with mud on my shoes. It is simply part of me.” Yet, how do we consider the verse “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself” (Leviticus 19:18; Matthew 19:19; 22:39; Mark 12:31; Romans 13:9; Galatians 5:14; James 2:8)? How does it fit with a habit like that?

Or, if we go into a business place with mud on the cattle barn on our boots, is it really heeding the teaching of God’s Word when we develop bad habits? Either we are not reading our Bibles or we are not obeying our Bibles. We are not obeying God’s Word.

Several Scriptures which we can take as good or bad habits.

— *Philippians 3: 13, 14*
“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, (14) I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.” We used these verses earlier to refer to Paul and how he could encourage those to follow him. Now, we would like to consider another aspect of these verses as a good habit or bad habit. We can take a look at these verses and we can read in there the importance of learning from the past, but going on in the present, and reaching into the future.

Sometimes we develop the bad habit of living in the past. “But when I was a boy.” Or, “Back then, that was the good old days.” Or, we recall all the bad things we did ten years ago, or last year, or last week — the mistakes we made — the embarrassing situations we were in — the difficulties we had — we live in the past. I read in here that the past is something we learn from and go on. We learn from our mistakes. We learn from our problems. We learn from the embarrassing situations that we have been through and we live today and press on into the future. Do we live in the past or do we learn from the past

so that we can have a good habit or we can have a bad habit?

Colossians 4:6 says “Let your speech be alway with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man.” Here it is speaking of gracious words, “seasoned with salt.” When we season something with salt, we do not pour it in by the bucket full. We simply sprinkle a little bit on to improve the flavour. If there is so much salt on that we cannot eat it, it is too much, but a little bit makes it taste better many times. That is what we are to do with our speech. Gracious words are words that have just enough salt on to make it easy to accept. Is that the habit that we develop? Then, the Scripture says “that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man.” This means we may know how to answer every man so that it can be received and accepted.

Have you sometimes made a mistake and someone shows you your mistake in a way that makes you feel like you could crawl through a wall? Other times you may make a mistake and someone shows it to you and corrects you, and you really appreciate what they brought to your attention. Why the difference? We can see here that quick answers without thought is a bad habit

which we can develop. Simply spouting something off the tip of our tongue because a mistake somebody made is a bad habit. Having gracious words with just enough salt on our speech that it can be easily accepted is a good habit that we need to develop. Those quick answers that come off the tip of our tongue that cut like a knife, or which discourage a person, or embarrass is a habit that we need to correct.

James 2:19, 20 “Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble. (20) But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?” James asked the question “Do you not know that faith without works is dead?” We read in Ephesians 2:10, “For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.” Why? So that we can glorify God. In James it speaks about faith and works. Our faith is revealed by our works. What are we trying to bring out here? Verse 19 says that the devils believe that there is one God and they tremble, but what do they do, only tremble?

The thought which we want to take from here that concerns good and bad habits, is that sometimes the Scriptures are

read, “Oh, I guess I am not doing it right,” and we shrug it off. The Lord speaks to us for a time and we dismiss it. We come through a week of revival meetings and the Lord is very precious to us, and He has shown us areas in our life that we need to refine, or correct and here are some adjustments that we need to make in our life. We really appreciate how the Lord is so near and dear to us through that time. However, after it was over, we never made the correction it continued on. The habit that we develop is that, yes we hear but then we do not do. We are no different from the devils. We tremble a little bit and then we dismiss it and on we go. Are we developing the habit that if we see there is something in my life I need to correct that I do it, and I do it right away? Tomorrow I might forget. Tomorrow something else might come up and be taken from my memory, or it is squeezed out and I cannot look after it.

Maybe it is brought to our mind that we have a confession that we need to make. Are we willing to make plans to do it as soon as possible? Or do we brush it off and say, “Maybe next week I can. Maybe next week I will have time. Next month I might have time.” We take that

attitude and it can go for years and still be staring us in the face. We still have not done it. Are we willing to always believe God and respond, and to always believe Him whatever He speaks to us, whatever He shows to us, whatever He reveals to us?

1 Peter 2:19, 20 “For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. (20) For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God.” This speaks of suffering for something we did not do, or suffering for righteousness’ sake. As we think of good habits/bad habits, some people will suffer cheerfully for something they never did, and some people will suffer cheerfully for something they did wrong when they are corrected. However, there are others who will always grumble because “It was not fair. I did not do it. They did not understand. It was not supposed to be this way.” Those same people are very likely to grumble when they are corrected for something they did do wrong. It is a habit that we develop. Are we willing to take it cheerfully or we do always grumble that “It was not handled or done right.

They did not understand. They did not see it right. It should have been done differently. I did not deserve this much.” A good habit of taking it cheerfully accepting, that the Lord has a purpose in it, or the bad habit of grumbling because we did not think it was done in the right way.

Philippians 4:8 says “Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.” The apostle Paul encourages us to think on things positively. What happens when we see something we do not fully understand and we did not get the whole story, or we only see a partial picture? Where do our thoughts go first? Do we take a look at the situation and give the person the benefit of the doubt, or do we think the worst? We could branch out into a lot of different areas but what habit have we developed? What habit do we develop in times like that?

If we do meet a situation like that our mind goes one way (this way or that way) and then we relate what we think to someone else, and on it goes, what habit

do we develop — good or bad? Do we think the worst or do we think the best? Do we give the benefit of the doubt or are we sure that they did it with evil intent? What habit are we developing with our thoughts that contribute to healthy relationships.

Another thing is procrastination. Are we habitually late or punctual? What is the habit that we are developing? Another one is forgetting or remembering. “Oh, I forgot. I did not remember.” It can be a habit that we develop that we never train ourselves to remember something. It is told to us but our mind is off on something else. We do not bring our mind to listen to what we are told. We develop that habit that if it is remembered that is fine, or if we chose to that is fine. Otherwise we forget it, dismiss it, and off we go. It is a habit that we develop.

Overcoming bad habits. How do we overcome bad habits? If we have developed bad habits how do we overcome them? We might say, “Well, I just can’t. I have tried and I have failed.” The only way that I know how to overcome bad habits is to recognize them as sin. You can say, “Well, this is not really sin. It is not that bad.” However, how do we get over top? How do we overcome bad habits unless we

can recognize them as sin. We need to recognize that God does not approve of them and that we are being a wrong influence to those around us. Perhaps we are sending a person in the wrong direction? Do we consider eternity? Where will our children be if they do exactly what we are doing? If they handle situations exactly the way I do? If we can relate the same as the apostle Paul in Philippians 4:9, where will our children go?

We can say, "Well, it is their choice. They have to make their own choice at some point," and that is true. However, we do leave an influence on them. How do we overcome bad habits except as recognizing it as sin and realize, and admit that we need the help of God? We need to commit it to Him, give it to Him, and allow Him to direct and to overrule.

In closing 1 Corinthians 15:58. "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord." This does not mean that we should never grow a garden. It does not mean that we

should never earn a living. What it brings out is that what we do, should be done for the Lord. Our work and labour should be done as unto the Lord. The way we relate to situations in life should be done as unto the Lord, in such a way that God can smile His smile of approval on it. It says, "forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord." If we are doing it as unto the Lord, then our life, our witness, and influence that we leave can be blessed. It can have God's blessing on it.

If we are doing it as unto the Lord, and we do fail, God is faithful to bring conviction upon us. Do we heed His voice and respond? For a closing thought as we consider abounding in the work of the Lord, the Lord's work, as it relates to my life, is first and foremost the keeping of my soul in the way of righteousness. We must think back to the fact that God has given me an eternal soul. What am I doing with it? Am I keeping it in the way of righteousness? It is important to abound in the work of the Lord is to keep my soul in the way of righteousness. May the Lord bless.

"But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment." (Matthew 12:36)

Scripture References

Leviticus	22:21	200, 201	3:13, 14	209
19:18	209	Matthew	3:17	207, 208
Deuteronomy	19:19	209	4:8	212
6:12	201	22:39	4:9	207, 208
Judges		Mark	4:13, 14	207
16:20	200	12:31	Colossians	
Psalms		Romans	4:6	210
119:109	206	13:9	Hebrews	
Proverbs		1 Corinthians	9:27, 28	202
16:31–33	205	15:58	12:2	208
Ecclesiastes		Galatians		James
12:1–7	203	5:14	2:8	209
Jeremiah		Ephesians	2:19, 20	210
13:23	199	2:10	1 Peter	
		Philippians	2:19, 20	211

From the Previous Issue:

The Nature and Power of Influence (Part I) — Its Nature

From a message by David G. Weaver

Sunday, March 01, 1992

Richland Mennonite Church

The Nature and Power of Influence (Part II) — Its Power

From a message by David Weaver

Sunday, April 12, 1992

Richland Mennonite Church

Book Reprint (Continued)

One Hundred Lessons In Bible Study

LESSON 9.

Our Lord's Discourses.

1.

Discourses: Sermon on the Mount.

Theme of the Discourse: Principles governing a practical Christian life.

References: Matthew 5–7.

To Whom Delivered: To the mul-

titudes.

Remarks: This sermon is a textbook on Christian faith. It is a rich sermon of 2,441 words.

2.

Discourses: On regeneration.

Theme of the Discourse: The

new birth.

References: John 3:1–21.

To Whom Delivered: To Nicodemus

Remarks: Men long in service may still be ignorant to its vital principles.

3.

Discourses: At Jacob's well.

Theme of the Discourse: The water of life.

References: John 4:1–42.

To Whom Delivered: To the woman and others of Samaria.

Remarks: A converted wreck may lead many to Christ.

4.

Discourses: In the synagogue.

Theme of the Discourse: "The acceptable year of the Lord."

References: Luke 4:16–31.

To Whom Delivered: To the Jews.

Remarks: "Now is the accepted time" (2 Corinthians 6:2). "To day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts" (Psalm 95:7; Hebrews 3:7, 15; 4:7).

5.

Discourses: Charge to the disciples.

Theme of the Discourse: The trials of true discipleship.

References: Matthew 10; Luke 9:1–6.

To Whom Delivered: To the dis-

ciples.

Remarks: The disciples brought back a glowing account of their experience. Everyone who dares to undergo the trials of true discipleship, may do the same.

6.

Discourses: Speaking in parables.

Theme of the Discourse: Presenting, by illustration, the nature, extent, etc., of the kingdom of heaven.

References: Matthew 13; Mark 4:1–33; Luke 8:4–18.

To Whom Delivered: To the multitudes.

Remarks: Christ, speaking in parables, stands as an interpreter, presenting the deep things of God in a way in which the world may grasp and accept the same.

7.

Discourses: In defense of His work.

Theme of the Discourse: The unity of the Son with the Father.

References: John 5:17–47.

To Whom Delivered: To the Jews.

Remarks: Blessed union. The world is invited to participate.

8.

Discourses: On casting out devils, etc.

Theme of the Discourse: The

authority of Jesus Christ. The blasphemy against the Holy Ghost.

References: Matthew 12:22–45; Mark 3:22–30; Luke 11:14–26.

To Whom Delivered: To the Pharisees.

Remarks: Read Hebrews 6:4–6; 10:26–29.

9.

Discourses: On traditions.

Theme of the Discourse: Outward cleansing does not purify the soul.

References: Matthew 15:1–20; Mark 7:1–23.

To Whom Delivered: To the scribes and the Pharisees.

Remarks: But a pure soul brings about an outward cleansing.

10.

Discourses: On the Christian attitude.

Theme of the Discourse: Fruits of conversion. Dealing with offenders and offenses.

References: Matthew 18.

To Whom Delivered: To the disciples.

Remarks: Our object in dealing with offenders should not be to crush them to repentance, but to get them to see the error of their way and seek salvation.

11.

Discourses: On the bread of life.

Theme of the Discourse: Christ, the bread of life.

References: John 6:22–58.

To Whom Delivered: To the multitudes.

Remarks: “Many of his disciples went back” (John 6:66). Like many of our modern “disciples,” when it came to the point of leaving their sins, or leaving Christ, they preferred to remain with their sins.

12.

Discourses: In defense of His Messiahship.

Theme of the Discourse: Evidences of divinity.

References: John 7.

To Whom Delivered: To the Jews.

Remarks: Hold a small object close to your eyes, and a whole city may be shut out from your sight. In like manner the Pharisees held their “traditions” so close to them that the overwhelming evidence of Christ’s divinity could not be seen.

13.

Discourses: On divorce.

Theme of the Discourse: Divorces are unScriptural.

References: Matthew 5:31, 32; 19:3-9; Mark 10:1–12; Luke 16:18.

To Whom Delivered: To the Pharisees.

Remarks: The most formidable enemy to the marriage vow.

14.

Discourses: On adultery.

Theme of the Discourse: To repent is better than to condemn.

References: John 8:3–11.

To Whom Delivered: To the Pharisees.

Remarks: Many an adulteress might be rescued if human aid would be extended to raise instead of crush.

15.

Discourses: On humility.

Theme of the Discourse: The more lowly the disciple, the more lofty his station in the kingdom of heaven.

References: Matthew 20:20–28; Mark 9:33–37.

To Whom Delivered: To the mother of James and John and to the disciples.

Remarks: “God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace unto the humble” (James 4:6; 1 Peter 5:5).

16.

Discourses: The sheepfold.

Theme of the Discourse: Jesus “the door of the sheep.”

References: John 10.

To Whom Delivered: To the Jews.

Remarks: The one door — Jesus Christ. The one sheepfold — the

kingdom of heaven.

17.

Discourses: The “sign” sermon.

Theme of the Discourse: Neglected opportunities will stand against us at the judgment.

References: Matthew 12:38–45; Mark 8:11–13; Luke 11:29–36.

To Whom Delivered: To the multitudes.

Remarks: “An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign” (Matthew 12:39). This generation did not pass away with the Pharisees of Christ’s day.

18.

Discourses: On Christian duties.

Theme of the Discourse: Instruction on righteous living.

References: Luke 12.

To Whom Delivered: To the disciples and an “innumerable multitude of people.”

Remarks: After all, the practical side of Christianity is to live the life of a Christian.

19.

Discourses: The “supper” sermon.

Theme of the Discourse: The need of coming humbly and willingly to the marriage feast of Christ.

References: Matthew 22:1–14; Luke 14:7–35.

To Whom Delivered: To the Jews.

Remarks: Two facts for the consideration of the lost: (1) The door is now open; (2) We do not know how soon it will be closed.

20.

Discourses: The “needle’s eye” sermon.

Theme of the Discourse: The need and blessing of forsaking all for Christ.

References: Matthew 19:16–30; Luke 14:7–35.

To Whom Delivered: To the multitudes.

Remarks: A worldly adage—“Money makes the mare go.” A message from Christ — “That which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God” (Luke 16:15).

21.

Discourses: On repentance.

Theme of the Discourse: Repentance necessary to salvation.

References: Luke 13:1–9.

To Whom Delivered: To those who had told Him of the punishment of the Galileans.

Remarks: Love to God necessitates a sorrow that we wronged Him.

22.

Discourses: Sermon of “woes.”

Theme of the Discourse: The “woes” of inconsistency and hypocrisy.

References: Matthew 23; Luke 11:29–52.

To Whom Delivered: To the multitudes.

Remarks: Read Luke 16:24; Matthew 18:7; 26:24.

23.

Discourses: The prophetic sermon.

Theme of the Discourse: Destruction of Jerusalem. Second coming of Christ.

References: Matthew 24, 25; Mark 13; Luke 21.

To Whom Delivered: To the disciples.

Remarks: The first event has transpired. We know it was terrible. Now is the time to avert the terrors of the second event.

24.

Discourses: The consolatory sermon.

Theme of the Discourse: The power and results of Christian love.

References: John 14–17.

To Whom Delivered: To the disciples.

Remarks: A few short hours crowded full of instruction on themes of momentous importance.

25.

Discourses: The great commission.

Theme of the Discourse: The final charge.

References: Matthew 28:18–20; Mark 16:15–18.

To Whom Delivered: To the disciples.

Remarks: Declaration — “All power is given me.” Command — “Teach all nations to observe all things.” Covenant — “Lo, I am with you alway.”

NOTE: — Many other discourses of our Lord might have been named, but we mentioned those which we considered of greatest

importance.

1. On what “mount” did Jesus preach His great sermon?

2. What did Nicodemus come to Jesus by night?

3. What was the effect of the discourse on the bread of life? Why?

4. Who are represented in the terms “sheep,” “shepherd,” “door,” “porter,” “hireling,” “wolf,” “stranger,” in discourse 16?

5. Enumerate our Lord’s discourses not mentioned in this lesson.

FIFTY FUNDAMENTAL FACTS

37. **“The weapons of our warfare are not carnal.”**

Here again is a prime distinction between the Church and the world. Ever since the fall of man his record has been one of carnal strife. The first child born to man turned out to be a murderer. The history of nations is largely a record of wars — wars between nations, wars between conflicting interests, family rows, strife in carnally-minded individuals and churches — gun fights, law-suits, fist fights, tongue fights —

and one of the signs of the last days is that of “wars and rumors of wars.” But Christian warfare is of an entirely different nature. While the soldier of the cross is the greatest hero there is, his heroism is not demonstrated in shedding human blood or besmirching human character. The greatest conquest that man has ever known was Christ’s victory on the cross. For a word-picture of the Christian warrior’s weapons, read Ephesians 6:10–18.



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