

Discipleship Messages

By Brother Emerson A. Wilson

**These messages were preached by the late Brother Emerson A. Wilson. They have been transcribed with minor alterations in an attempt to preserve the original burden of the messages.*

Transcribed and Distributed by the Zanesville

Church of God
3064 Coopermill Road
Zanesville, Ohio 43701

Print Date: November/December 2022

Contents

What True Discipleship Consists Of (May 24, 1970).....	3
Discipleship (July 7, 1985).....	18
Discipleship (March 9, 1986).....	33
The Mark of True Discipleship (June 16, 1986)	47
Disciples' Priority (June 17, 1986)	62
True Discipleship --Love (June 1986).....	80.

What True Discipleship Consists Of---- May 24, 1970

Luke 14:16-35

16 Then said he unto him, A certain man made a great supper, and bade many:**17** And sent his servant at supper time to say to them that were bidden, Come; for all things are now ready.**18** And they all with one consent began to make excuse. The first said unto him, I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it: I pray thee have me excused.**19** And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them: I pray thee have me excused.**20** And another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.**21** So that servant came, and shewed his lord these things. Then the master of the house being angry said to his servant, Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind.**22** And the servant said, Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room.**23** And the lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled.**24** For I say unto you, That none of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper.**25** And there went great multitudes with him: and he turned, and said unto them,**26** If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.**27** And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple.**28** For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it?**29** Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him,**30** Saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish. **31** Or what king, going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand?**32** Or else, while the other is yet a great way off, he sendeth an ambassage, and desireth conditions of peace.**33** So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple.**34** Salt is good: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be seasoned?**35** It is neither fit for the land, nor yet for the dunghill; but men cast it out. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.

We have a familiar lesson before us and Jesus closed this portion of his teaching with the thought *he that hath ears, let him hear*. If you'll notice in the twenty-fifth verse, this is the thought that so strikes us from here on down, that great multitudes went with Him and He turned and said unto them.... Before us in this text is what we might say is the catechism of Christ or what true discipleship consists of. If you'll notice from the sixteenth verse down, man made excuses for not coming with Christ and following Christ but Jesus gave the reason why men cannot and do not follow Christ. I want to repeat that even though there is much preaching [already] along this line, there is much [more] preaching needed because there

are too many people hung up in their walk with Christ and not getting along well. They are halted in following Jesus and Jesus puts before us the basic reasons men and women can't cut loose and follow Christ. You may say that was people back there but God fashioned their hearts all alike and we are just human like people back in AD 33. The things that hindered people back then hinder people yet today. I know the devil will tell us we are in a different age and this doesn't bother us. Jesus knows man. Go back in the second chapter of John to where it says that He knew what was in man. He knows where our trouble lies; He knows where our failures are. He knows what is really giving us trouble. The devil will make us feel it is this, that and the other but the Bible will tell us where our trouble really is. I'm hear to declare that this thing will work if you meet the conditions. I'm glad that Jesus came to give us life and gives us more abundant life. If we'll lay hold of this life and meet the conditions it will get stronger, richer, fuller, and deeper. The experience will grow; you'll not dwindle or dwarf. It won't take any groaning or toiling on your part. I'm getting after the groaners and the toilers. You people, praying that the saints will pray for you because you're having a hard time, get rid of some of the things.

When Jesus talked about this life, He talked about a life from Heaven. All we need to do is get rid of the things that hinder us in this life. It will produce, it will become strong, and it won't take any groaning or toiling on your part. You know there are people who groan so much that they get blessed in groaning. That's right! They like to groan, growl and toil. Let me tell you something. If you could get to Heaven by your toiling, you wouldn't enjoy it. Why? We would find you 500 years after you got there sitting on the curb with your head down. I'd say, "Brother, isn't Heaven wonderful!" "Yeah, it's wonderful. But when I think of what a hard time I had to get here..." It would spoil Heaven for you. When Jesus talked about this life, when He talked about people who were having trouble having faith in God, He said, "Consider the lilies. It doesn't toil or groan." It just applies itself to God's plan. When it applies itself, it bursts forth in beauty. You know what the biggest job is that we have? It's keeping everything out of the way so the Holy Ghost can work in our life. If we will give Him liberty, He'll produce something beautiful and glorious in every one of our lives.

It's About Finishing

In the text, it said Jesus turned to the multitude. I know He wasn't a modern preacher because He would not have turned on the multitude. He would have built a bigger building and took them in. He turned on the multitude that thought were following Him. He said, "Hold it! Nobody can come after Me unless he meets at least these three conditions." I want to divide the point that there is a vast difference between you coming to Jesus and following

Jesus. This is the reason for the failures with too many who get a good start and they don't finish. This lesson is on finishing, finishing an experience. When the seventh angel sounded, the mystery of God was finished. The mystery of God is the church. We are in the finishing days of the church and she is being finished out now. Jesus is going to come back after her one of these mornings. God is putting the finishing touches on her. This lesson is on finishing for Christ, not starting. It's about getting an experience where you can finish!

God had something in mind when He saved everyone of us, just as much as when He dropped the little seed in the ground . He's got something in mind. When He drops that seed into the ground He can see a lily blooming in all of its beauty. Even so, when God saves us He has one thing in mind: a perfect man in Christ. If you keep everything out of the way, that is exactly what God will make out of you. You'll grow into the full stature of Christ. Jesus brought a lesson before us of the need of laying aside some things.

I want to say that the message is not antiquated. Down here in 1970, people who are not getting along good with God are having the same problems they had in AD 33. Man doesn't need anything later than the Gospel to take care of his needs and give him victory to go on. The biggest mistake the ministry ever made was when the devil got them thinking this is a modern time and modern means are needed to take care of man's needs. This Bible is good for all time. God is not going to leave us here another million years, but if He did there would be enough in that Bible because it's alive. It will grow right with you!

The Cost

When Jesus began to talk in the fourteenth chapter of Luke, I repeat that man made excuses. I am not going to deal with excuses but Jesus gave the reason why men do not and cannot follow Christ on through and get a finished experience with God. He sets forth the three basic props of our Christian experience: building, battling and benefiting. All of them are true in our life if we're living for God. He shows the sad end of those who fail to truly count the cost and pay the price. I won't go into the lesson but it lets us know that an unfinished house is no good. He lets us know that a compromising soldier is no good. He lets us know, last of all, that salt that has lost its savour is no good. He also sets forth the Kingdom in a great lesson of a supper prepared. He lets us know that in initial salvation, everything you need is a gift of God. It's a grant unto you. You come with old time repentance and godly sorrow---I want to press the thought that godly sorrow is the kind that God puts on you. When God puts sorrow on you, you're sorry. You call it old time conviction, whatever you want, but it's a sorrow that God puts on your heart. When you

come with real godly sorrow, working repentance, God will grant unto you this salvation but then it's going to cost you something to keep it. This is where the trouble is and this is why I am wholeheartedly against all this preaching on the love of God without any justice of God or anything else. It warps the minds of the people. They just expect to live off of the good graces of God. God gives you every attribute of salvation but it's going to cost you and I something to keep it working in our lives.

In verse 29 (it's sad but it's true), He declares that many are happy to come to Christ; they lay hold of Him. They have eaten of Him, they drank of Him, and they had a good foundation but they were not able to finish. You may say that it was this or that reason. You'll read in verse 28 and 29, He lays it in our lap of understanding. He says, "Which of you intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first and count the cost of finishing?" It means something when we come to Jesus Christ that we come with the attitude of heart that we are going to go all the way. Amen! Really count the cost of finishing the thing. Count the cost, He said, to see if you have sufficient to finish it. Too many have made a good start, I'm sorry, but they were unable to finish and they quit. They quit building; some compromised, others lost their salt and are going right on. Don't be deceived. Some say they quit because too many do not live as they profess, there are too many hypocrites. Others say they quit for other excuses but the Bible says they quit because they didn't have sufficient to finish. I want to drive this point home: if you have the kind of experience God wants you to have, what others do around you will not affect your relationship with God. If you get affected by others around you, you do not have what God wants you to have; and the reason you don't have it is because you haven't sold out. Amen! You can't tell me you quit because others did this and that. I realize that there is a certain influence over our lives because of others. I won't say that you won't feel it when others do not do right. I am saying that they can't hinder you from going on in your course for God if you get the experience God wants you to have. The devil has too many building on that level that if things go well, they'll make it. I have a little secret for you: things aren't going well. I can prove by the Bible that they are going to get worse from here on out. Your building for God is going to take more effort; let's just face facts. I want to serve notice on some of you people that have had a half-hearted attitude: hitting church Sunday morning, maybe Sunday night, leaving before it's over -----you're not going to make it. I'm telling you the truth. It is going to take everything that you and I have with a desire to do more or we are not going to make it!

Voices

The devil will tell you anything. You talk about voices, John heard them in the Revelation. There were lots of them and they will tell you anything imaginable. They have people sold on the idea that they will make it if they just do 'this'. Everyone has their own program for their experience. Too many have set their own standard for their experience. I'm here to tell you that Jesus told us in the Word beyond all confusion exactly what it costs to finish this race for God. We'll have to do some squaring up, selling out, and meeting conditions. I know, I can feel it. You don't have to write me a letter that this kind of preaching will run people off. I'm getting that sent to my address pretty regularly. Well, the kind of preaching Jesus did ran a whole multitude off. He was not going to be guilty of deceiving the hearts of men and women and I'm not either! You're not going to make Heaven with this half-hearted business! Deception is not all out in Roman Catholicism and Protestantism. If you've ever heard the Revelation preached, you've heard that those three unclean spirits like frogs went OUT from those places. They went to the whole world. They are working on me, they are working on you! What did they do when they were down in Protestantism? They got people to turn from truth to their own ideas and ways and still serve God. They went to hell. That is the same way that spirit will work in the church of God. It will make you feel you can go your own way and still serve God. Jesus is still standing and looking at the multitude and saying, "Look, son or daughter, if you're going to follow Me, there are some rules to meet."

Somebody may say that I am just being hard. No, I'm not being hard. It is a fact of having victory. How do I know that it is necessary? First of all, I learned it by being [your] pastor for fifteen years. Anybody who oversteps the rules of the Bible goes to pot. If I didn't know it because the Bible says so, I would know by experience. There is no one yet who lived back of light, lived back their responsibility, and kept the victory. God had a witness for His truth. Even backsliders are witnesses that God's word is true. Praise the Lord!

Having Sufficient to Finish

When we boil it down, we have to pull our sights in. When we begin to say, "The reason I didn't make it was because I had my eyes on somebody and they failed and I went down..." No, no, no friend. If you're not still building for God, there is only one reason: you ran out of material. The only reason you ran out of material is because you got cut off from the Source of supply. Praise the Lord! I'm glad He fixed it that way. Why? I would have to admit that my experience was going to fluctuate with world conditions, congregational

conditions, or family conditions. What kind of salvation would that be? God deals with the individual heart. The Gospel has never changed. Galatians 3:8 says *the Gospel was before preached unto Abraham*. What was it? Come out from your kindred, come out from your people, come out from your family, come out from your way and walk alone with Me. That is still the Gospel yet today. It's not preached enough but it is still the Gospel. God has to have you alone without any strings and everyone else is in a secondary position. When He gets you there, thank God, He can handle you. He can work with you. You can walk with Him. You can have victory. The truth is, the reason many do not finish is because they did not have that which is sufficient. Some may say, "Don't people affect you?" Well, the reason that people hinder you is because you haven't paid the price. Why? Part of the price is forsaking all people. If you really forsake all people, with them behind you, they will not hinder you in your building for God. Come on now, a dear companion, a good wife (I'm speaking to good people)...I'm telling you right now, that there are too many who are hindered by these spirits. You can get free from them if you meet Bible conditions. I'm glad there is a place where we can get free from these false religious spirits and other deceptive spirits. Where? When you meet Bible conditions and turn yourself over to the power of God.

God help parents who are making excuses for their children and giving them a good reason for not acting, dressing and being what a saint ought to be. Those old spirits will make you feel that someone has mistreated them so they have a perfect right to lay out of the Sunday School class. This, that and the other; the parents stand right beside them. Remember you're building something up in their lives that no doubt some day you're going to shed lots of tears over and their soul may be lost. It's just human to blame others. I know that. I do it myself. It's always the first thought that comes to me, that it was someone else's fault. Times when I drive off of the edge of the road and my wife says, "What's the matter?" I say, "The wind of that truck blew me." The truth was that I wasn't a good enough driver. That's just human. Think now. Jesus gave us Truth. The reason other people hinder us is because we haven't paid the price.

Forsaking All People

Look at verse twenty-six, twenty-seven and thirty-three. I'm still preaching on this. I want to see people do good for God. I want to see people get loose; I don't want to see people start and wither in their experience. I want to see you finish. *If any man come unto Me*----I'm preaching beyond this coming to Jesus business. That is necessary, but Jesus stepped one bit of truth farther: following Him after you come to Him. This coming to Jesus business is taking our globe. Mass evangelism is making big moves to get people supposedly

saved---just come to Jesus. But Jesus talked about following Him after you come to Him. He said that *if any man come after Me or follow Me, after you have come, there are some conditions to meet. In other words, true discipleship. If any man come to Me and hate not his father, mother, wife, children, brethren, sisters, yea his own life, he cannot be my disciple.* It's an impossibility! *And whosoever doth not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be my disciple. So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple.* Here is the true cost. *If any man ---this will work for anybody---come to Me:* I want us to see this is more than just coming to Jesus. Then He comes down and takes those that are closest to us as a symbol of all people. If you're going to follow Me, you're going to have to hate or love less father, mother.... Why? Father and mother are hindering a lot of people in their Christain experience.

In Deuteronomy 27:16 God spoke and it's still true: *Cursed be the man that setteth light by his father or his mother.* Oh, how many are hindered in following Christ because dad and mother are in this organization. Dad and mother believe 'this'. He came right on down and said wife and husband. Come on now. You wives who say, "I'd like to serve God but my husband won't go along. He won't do what's right." This doesn't have anything to do with your experience. This is the devil's way of working. Maybe your husband will never do right. Are you going to go to hell because he is? Come on! Father, mother, wife, children... "Oh, we couldn't get into services because the children wanted to play ball." Is that right? Is that right? You couldn't get in services because you didn't love God wholeheartedly and have Him first in your life.

I believe there is a time to play ball but it's not during church time. As my boys grew up, they all had to learn the same thing. Everyone of them wanted to play basketball. I went along. But I said that they needed to tell the coach that any night they had practice on prayer meeting night or have a game when church is going on, they wouldn't be there. Well, they only missed twice and the coach let him know that he was going to have to make up his mind. Well, I said that he already had his mind made up. He's quitting basketball and he's going to church. We didn't have to make up our minds. I let them know it had been made up for several years. This is why the church has lost its power, its mark and its influence in the world. She has catered to the world until the world has no use for her. Jesus sent a church to set up a standard for the world. Now, why did He mention all of these things? Somebody may say, "Brother Wilson, don't you have enough to preach on without preaching on baseball?" Some of you need help along these lines. More than just one. If it was just one of you, I would tell you [personally]. I want to see you be prosperous in this thing. I don't

want you to see your children lost. Right while you give vent to them, there is something building up in them that is letting them know there is no reality to salvation. You don't realize it but right in their minds they are building up the fact that your experience isn't real. There is nothing real about this thing. If it were, you would do just like the Bible said. You're killing your influence while you're giving vent to the children.

Now, why did He mention father, wife, mother, and children? Because these are earthly ties. Your family affairs are a blessing that God gave man to enjoy here on the earth but when Jesus comes again, and we go to that realm of eternity, all earthly ties will be forgotten. Whether it is father, mother, children or wife, it is merely an earthly blessing for you to enjoy here. When Jesus Christ comes to us and brings up real salvation, He brings us an eternal blessing. Putting it in plain language, He lets us understand that we must not let earthly things hinder the eternal work of God within our souls.

I'm going to tell you the truth. Jesus loved that whole multitude when 4,988 walked away. I wouldn't feel bad if half a dozen got up and walked out [from this message]. 4,988 walked away that morning when Jesus finished His message. Friend, there is a cost, there are articles here. The writer of the song is speaking more than poetry when he wrote the words:

My home and friends are dear to me. Yet He is dearer still.

In my affection first He'll be, and first His righteous will.

You can go along with the profession and not meet these conditions but you'll never have the victory, the joy, the reality or the influence for God until you meet Bible conditions. The going will be hard and you won't be able to go when you fail to meet Bible conditions.

Verse 26 *If any man come to me and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life ...* Now this gets down to us: *His own life*. Get beyond what mom and dad want to do, what your companion and children say, and then get right down to what we think, our own lives, and our own desires. Job 2:4 says "Skin for skin. All that a man hath, he will give for his life." That is pretty binding. There are plenty of people who have given up an experience of salvation for their own lives. They want to live their way. In verse 27 of the text He said that whosoever doth not bear his cross and come after Him cannot be His disciple.

In Matthew 16, when Peter withstood Him and said that He wasn't going down to Jerusalem to die, Jesus turned to him and said that He must go to Jerusalem and suffer death by the chief priests and elders. And if [Peter] was going to follow Him, he must take up his cross and follow Him. That cross is where we die in complete consecration. You won't have any trouble getting your husband, wife and children on the altar if you get yourself there. If you really get yourself there in real consecration to God's eternal will, there will be a freedom that will come over your soul that you haven't had before. There will be a victory come into your life that I am afraid too many haven't felt before. He lets us know that we must take up our cross; there is a death for us to die. It is here the soul is set free to truly follow Christ. Now you have to admit the fact, it is people and things that are hindering people. Jesus is devising a part of His plan of salvation where we can get free from people and things. When we truly die out to God's will, it is here He becomes Architect, Foundation, and Material. The Scripture said that in Him the building is fitly framed together and grows up into a holy temple for the Lord.

I want us to understand that a pure Christian character is the most beautiful and priceless possession. It cannot be bought. It must be built. When Jesus liken you that hear His words and do them to a man who builds a house on the rock, He was using a symbolic expression of you building a Christian experience that will stand. It makes no difference what the circumstances of life are, it will stand. Now God is doing His part. He furnishes the material when He gives us understanding of His divine word and will. When we become doers of that, we are building something that will stand.

Discipleship demands constant reference to the plans. God, deliver us from the attitude that we can live as we like by our own inclinations and mere impulse; yielding to the pressures of circumstances; saying that we couldn't help it because we were carried away by the flood; everybody is doing it. That type of individual will never build anything worth living in or look at. You're going to have to get hold of an individual experience with God and then consult the plan of the Master. Do not live like a vegetable, taking strength from whatever is nearest your roots. Don't live like an animal, just by impulses. Give up wholeheartedly to God and do what the Scripture says. Church, set your affections. The devil will tell you that you can't. If you can't set your affections, you need hands laid on you because you are bound.

Let me help you in your thinking. This is the devil's avenue of approach; it's the way God speaks to the soul too: through the mind. When the Scripture says to set your affections on things above, don't allow yourself to think on anything that you can't lawfully do. Let me say it again. Don't allow yourself to think on anything that you can't lawfully do! You people

who do not have an earthly companion, you're going to have to gird up the loins of your mind and not allow yourself to think on some things that married people can think on. I'm making it plain. You get to thinking on something you can't lawfully carry out and you're heading down the street that sin is on. The farther down the street you go, you're going to lose your force and power against that thing. DON'T THINK on anything you can't lawfully carry out. The devils rolls a thought in, you roll it out. Set your affections on things above. Thank God, there are some things you can think on all the time and they never get you into trouble. May God help us to see that it is our privilege to set our affections. If we do it, we'll have greater victory.

Making War

Verse 33 *So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple.* Isn't that a sad statement? *He cannot be my disciple.* It's impossible. There is no way. After we get ourselves on the altar, after Christ has disposed of our lives, in a way, He disposes of our property. I'll explain myself. Luke 14:31 *What king, going to make war against another king sitteth not down first, and consulteth whether he will be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand?* In other words, He lets us know that the odds are two-to-one. What king is He talking about? He is talking about you being a disciple and He is giving you an allegory or symbolic picture. What king is making war against another king? Well, when Christ saves you, washes you in His own blood, He makes you a king. The very minute He makes you a king, that very experience He is giving you is declaring war against the world and the things of the devil. The devil has more things than all of us put together. Sure he does! Unless we make a consecration and put all of ours over in the name of the Lord, get free from it, the devil will use those things. We'll do just like the Scripture said: while he is a long way off, we haven't even got to the battle yet, he will put a false fear on you and you will compromise and desire a term of peace short of real victory. Why? Because he used some of the things. He'll use your job. Some of his biggest fighting takes place while we are yet a long way off from the battle. He does it through false fears. I've told you before, he had me fret about a bridge and how I was going to get over it; when I got there, there wasn't even a creek let alone a bridge. He is a liar. He will come on you and scare you to death; telling you that you're going to lose everything you have. How do you get victory over that? Give it all away. Put it over in the name of Jesus. When he says that you're going to lose everything you have say, "Look, boy. You don't have to take it from me. You have to take it from the Lord. It is all in His hands. If you can get it from the Lord, take it." But if you don't make a consecration of it all, you're not going to be able to take this day. This day is

similar to Job's day when we're being tried and tested but Job had it all consecrated. When the devil took everything, he looked up and said, "The Lord gave it, and the Lord took it away. Blessed be the name of the Lord. You'll have to do something else beside that to whip me."

The devil gets us bound with things. The Scripture speaks firmly on the fact that when we go away from God, the second stage is worse than the first. I'm not preaching on *the* reason for that but I'm preaching on *one* reason for it; there is more than one reason. One reason is because you have a cavity in your soul that has been enlarged and enriched with the power of God. When you go away from God and go back to sin you have an emptiness there, a yearning, and a deeper desire for something than you had before. Why? That desire has been sated; it's been satisfied. When you lose that satisfaction the devil will use things. He'll make you buy a new home bigger than you can handle. He'll cause you to buy new furniture, more than you can stand. What's the trouble? You're trying to get satisfied; trying to get satisfied; trying to get satisfied. It puts you in a worse state than what you were before. The sad part of it is, some come to Jesus and they are so loaded down with things that they feel they can't meet Bible conditions to get on their feet. I'm going to tell you that the only way to get on your feet is to do square business with God. That is the starting place.

What is in Your Hand?

You may think that you can't do square business with God. You think that if you paid your tithes, that you have more bills than your paycheck will go around. You need to give up to God. You need to realize that God is not governed by dollars. Do you know what God says? He says to you just what He said to Moses. "What do you have in your hand?" "God, I ain't got nothing. All I have is a stick that I watch the sheep with." "That's all we'll need. We're going to whip old Egypt with that thing." God is not governed by circumstances! God is not governed or limited by man's limitations. God is the one that can take nothing. If you have nothing in your hand, God can put something in it and then bless it! "What do you have in your hand, Moses?" "Just a stick." "I can't talk right. I'm not a leader." "What do you have in your hand?" "A stick." "That's all we'll need. Come on."

The devil, working through human reasoning, is hindering people from some of the richest blessings. If you're in bad shape financially, if you'll line up in your soul and do square business with God, you'll have more reason to rejoice than anyone else in the congregation. Why? God is going to work miracles for you. What do you have in your hand? I listened to the other night driving in the car to a religious record of the Bible and they had one on about David and Goliath. I thought I was going to have to stop the car. Why?

Though I've read it and preached on it, it refreshed my soul again to see that little boy with faith in God. Saul put his armor on him. This is what human reasoning will do for you. More than one that could have been used by God to shake this world have been ruined because people got ahold of them and wanted to send them off to college, putting Saul's armor on them. God is still asking, "What do you have in your hand?" David tried that armor on and said that he couldn't wear it. He hadn't proved it. Just give me the things that I've proved. He walked out there and that old boy roared, "What are you going to do, send a baby out?" David said, "Hold it. You're defying the Israel of God. You're coming in the power of the Philistines, but I'm coming in the name of the Lord God Almighty." Why, if he had faith, did he take five stones? He not only had faith, he had good sense. Goliath has some brother-in-laws and brothers. He had four more rounds in case anyone else wanted to step up. He would have whipped the whole army. Somebody may say that they don't believe he could have done it. Well, they never will but he believed it! He knew that God was greater than any circumstance and any situation. And you're going to have that kind of faith if you ever sell out to God. If you don't, you're going to hold in reserve. You're going to hold this back and that back; but if you believe God is God and the Master of the universe, you'll not be afraid to give up to Him. Praise the Lord!

Saltless Salt

So we declare war on the powers of sin when we start to live for God. If you don't get everything on the altar, the devil is going to work through it. He has more things than you've ever thought of. He will dazzle them before your eyes. You better get it all on the altar. Get your eyes anointed to the place where you are ready to put anything, no matter what it is, if it affects your knowledge of God and vision of God and truth, under your feet and stomp on it. You can live victoriously. Peter warned us in I Peter 2:1, *Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul.* That is the battle you are in. Then Jesus teaches in the simplest terms with the seed being dropped in four kinds of ground. In one kind of ground the seed couldn't grow. It was the real seed. It was Christianity in any heart; but what choked it out? The lust of other things entering in choked out the word and it became unfruitful. It is needful for us, it's needful for us, it's needful for us to know that we've given up all; we've counted the cost of finishing. Jesus came down in those last words in verse 33---this is the pitiful plight of too many today---**33** *So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple.***34** *Salt is good: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be seasoned?* You've heard me ask many times before, can saltless salt be salted? He said it is good for nothing but to be cast out and

trodden under the foot of man. Jesus taught in his teachings in Matthew's gospel that we are the light of the world and salt of the earth. Can saltless salt be salted? No. The only thing you can do is become earth; admit that you have lost your experience with God. Too many are just trying to get salted over. You're just going to have to admit that you're a sinner and repent.

In Medina I was holding a meeting. There were quite a few movement people who came out and special singers. They enjoyed the word. About the third night, they hit the altar. I went down and asked if I could help them. They were weeping, "Yes, Brother Wilson. After we have sat under the word, we realize that we are just sinners. We have been working, teaching Sunday School and singing in the church of God but we were awakened tonight that we have been backsliding for years." Saltless salt cannot be salted. All we can do is admit our true condition, come in repentance, and admit that we are just the earth. God will make a new creature out of you. Salting saltless salt is a waste of time. This is what is happening in movements of men. They are trying to salt saltless salt instead of owning Bible conditions and getting down to bedrock. That is why you hear so much in the papers and campmeetings telling people who have wandered away from God to come and rededicate. You don't need to rededicate; you need to repent. When salt has lost its savour, wherewith can it be seasoned? There is an funny thing about salt: it can lay right out in the weather, exposed to the sun and rain and lose its pungency but retain its appearance. It will still look like salt but it won't season anything. If you don't think so, just drive out to the salt lakes and see it. Thousands of tons of salt that looks just like what you have on the table; but it has laid in the weather and has lost its seasoning quality. What does it teach us? It teaches us that as Christians, unless we keep up a fervent life of connection with God, day by day, we can go live a normal life, not go out into sin, [but be dead]. This is the reason many people don't realize why they are dead. I had a woman in this meeting tell me that she is as dead as she can be but doesn't know what she has done. The devil had her charmed with the fact that she never went out into the world. She was just saltless salt. She had not kept up her devotion with God. Because of that, she was exposed to the natural conditions until she lost the seasoning quality out of her life. Many people are doing this today.

Church of God, Jesus' counsel to us in this lesson says, "What king goes to make war with another king who has twice as many in the army as you have unless you sit down and counsel." Who are you going to counsel with? There is only one to counsel with. Jesus says, "I counsel thee buy of Me gold tried in the fire." He was endeavoring to lead people back to this very tried and true condition; something that will stand. Christ lays before us the cost of

real discipleship and the cost of apostasy. These individuals who Jesus talked about in the Revelation and our day, they are lives that are not animated with the love of Christ, not filled with the Spirit of Christ and not governed by the principles of Christ. Their lives are not blameable, no one could lay a charge against them, but they are not beautiful. They are not wicked, but they are worldly. They are not criminal but they are not Christian. The salt has lost its savour. Ephesus was charged with leaving the first love. This thing here is more deceptive: the salt loses. It isn't the fact that you've left something, it's the fact that you lose something. When we lose this we'll have a terrible battle trying to meet the standards of God's word. When you possess it, it will be easy. Anything you love to do is easy. The word of God lets us know that when we pay the price, we are worth something to man as well as Christ. Church of God, we are here for a purpose. If it wasn't for godly people and praying people, our world would be in a thousand times worse condition than it is.

Don't forget the lesson. Ten righteous people could have saved Sodom. That lets us know what a premium God holds righteous people in. The powers of this old world and false religion that are battling against you will beat you down and make you feel that you're an odd ball. You'll wonder why you are here. It will do you good to read the eleventh chapter of Hebrews. If you're walking by faith, the world is not worthy of you. Amen. You are holding the judgments of God when you live for God and hold the right relationship with him. You're holding the judgments of God off of the very people who will condemn you and maybe make fun of you. Within your heart you ought to know that you are keeping the judgments of God off of them because you are living right. God is still looking down on this world. I thank God for it. We are in a time, even Jesus declared in the eighteenth chapter of Luke when man doesn't have too much regard for God or man, like the unjust judge. Thank God that widow, a picture of the church, was persistent and hung right on. When she hung on, she got what she went after. She finished the cost that she was pursuing. You and I can do the same thing. It makes no difference if man has got to a place where they have no regard for God or man. If we'll be true, persistent, and hold fast to the light of God's eternal truth, we can finish the cause that God set out for us.

You who are away from God, know within your soul. You are a living witness to the fact that Jesus' words in [the opening] text are true. I would like to hedge some off that are heading that way. I pray that God in His love, mercy and compassion will awaken some of you who have lost your grip on God and help you to see ----that God would be good enough to let you see---- what way you are headed. Turn from it. Give up all. I've told you before [in previous messages], you talk about success. There is no one who has real success if he hasn't

laid hold of or retained his experience with God. There are lots of things that the world is looking at as profitable. It is so profitable to them, that they couldn't give it up for Christ. The Bible still stands right before everyone of us and says, "What would it profit you?" What profit would there be in it if you gained, not momentary pleasure, but the whole world? Now you're not going to get that, but if you could and lost your soul in doing it, it wouldn't be the first bit of profit to you. The only true route of success is selling out to God. You sell out to God and give out to Him, He will break that power of sin in your life and give you victory over yourself. Thank God! You can live by His promises that He will afford you and supply your needs while you travel here. I will go beyond that: He will bless you with good things. All the time you can have the sweet assurance that if death comes on you, you're just stepping--thank God--- into a bigger, brighter, and better situation with God.

Always in Mind

I went to pray for a brother in Kentucky. He doesn't know God. The thing that always whipped him out was his tobacco. Nobody put it on him; he knew himself that it was wrong. I was so concerned but when I got there I found that he had lost his mind. His wife was taking care of him. She had lived for God for years, a dear, sweet old sister. It would make your heart warm just to be around her. She took such care for him and carried such a burden. She was heartbroken when his mind began to wander. He is in his late eighties. The other night she had him out in the yard walking him around and all at once she dropped dead. Everyone has been so concerned about him but she just stepped away that quickly. What does that teach us? It teaches us what kind of people we are. We are living, everyone of us on a very fickle thread. We are just here for a time. It has always been a trick of the enemy to get us interested in the things of this life, but we are only here for a time. Right at an unguarded time, before I step in my automobile my heart could stop and I'll be gone. You may not like to think about that. You haven't begun to live where you ought to until you live with that thought foremost in your mind. We can't beat the problems of life right. We have our values all messed up unless we have that thought of a better resurrection before our minds all the time. Jesus turned to the multitude and said that except you meet these conditions, you can't be His disciple. There is no need to struggle. God knows I have no thought in mind of one quitting and giving up. I do want you to see that there are conditions to meet. Certainly, I am encouraging you to meet those conditions where you can go on and walk in a victorious manner for God. ●

Luke 14

1And it came to pass, as he went into the house of one of the chief Pharisees to eat bread on the sabbath day, that they watched him. **2**And, behold, there was a certain man before him which had the dropsy. **3**And Jesus answering spake unto the lawyers and Pharisees, saying, Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath day? **4**And they held their peace. And he took him, and healed him, and let him go; **5**And answered them, saying, Which of you shall have an ass or an ox fallen into a pit, and will not straightway pull him out on the sabbath day? **6**And they could not answer him again to these things. **7**And he put forth a parable to those which were bidden, when he marked how they chose out the chief rooms; saying unto them, **8**When thou art bidden of any man to a wedding, sit not down in the highest room; lest a more honourable man than thou be bidden of him; **9**And he that bade thee and him come and say to thee, Give this man place; and thou begin with shame to take the lowest room. **10** But when thou art bidden, go and sit down in the lowest room; that when he that bade thee cometh, he may say unto thee, Friend, go up higher: then shalt thou have worship in the presence of them that sit at meat with thee. **11**For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted. **12**Then said he also to him that bade him, When thou makest a dinner or a supper, call not thy friends, nor thy brethren, neither thy kinsmen, nor thy rich neighbours; lest they also bid thee again, and a recompence be made thee. **13**But when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind: **14**And thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee: for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just. **15**And when one of them that sat at meat with him heard these things, he said unto him, Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the Kingdom of God. **16**Then said he unto him, A certain man made a great supper, and bade many: **17**And sent his servant at supper time to say to them that were bidden, Come; for all things are now ready. **18**And they all with one consent began to make excuse. The first said unto him, I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it: I pray thee have me excused. **19**And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them: I pray thee have me excused. **20**And another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come. **21**So that servant came, and shewed his lord these things. Then the master of the house being angry said to his servant, Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind. **22**And the servant said, Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room. **23**And the lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled. **24**For I say unto you, That none of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper. **25**And there went great multitudes with him: and he turned, and said unto them, **26**If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. **27**And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my

disciple. 28For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it? 29Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, 30Saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish. 31Or what king, going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand? 32Or else, while the other is yet a great way off, he sendeth an ambassage, and desireth conditions of peace. 33So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple. 34Salt is good: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be seasoned? 35 It is neither fit for the land, nor yet for the dunghill; but men cast it out. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.

Our mind is drawn back to the cost of discipleship. There is one thing about Jesus' teachings and the burden of His heart (It's the same burden of my heart), Jesus wasn't satisfied to see great multitudes come and hear Him. He wasn't satisfied to just see men and women make a start. He began to teach them, from the beginning of His teachings, the cost of finishing. God is interested in men and women finishing. The deep burden of my heart and that of ever true pastor is to see men and women be established, settled, and finish their experience with victory. There is no greater privilege given to a pastor than to preach the funeral of one who has been faithful and finished their course with victory. They paid the price, sold out, met Bible conditions and finished with victory.

When I think about counting the cost, I often say that we are in a time when businesses are in great concern over reevaluating the cost because this time is a buyer's market. People are operating on small margins because of the condition we are in. People are willing to sell right down to a fraction to stay in business. Because of that it is necessary for businesses to continue reevaluating their business. They are always checking to see exactly what it costs to manufacture. Then they discern from that what the selling price can be and what the lowest price can be to still stay in business. If people in a factory were to come to the conclusion that it costs them \$5 to make a product, and they start selling it for \$4.50, it is just a matter of time until they are out of business. I'm using that as an illustration that we need to reevaluate our experience. The enemy is out to deceive us on every side.

Coming from one who is happy in the Lord, if we honestly and sincerely count the cost of being a Christian and pay the price, we'll find that the profits and benefits far exceed anything that it costs. I know salvation costs some more than others. I know some have to walk a different road than others do. Whatever it costs you to be a true follower of Jesus Christ, the benefits, the profits, and the blessings far exceed anything that it costs. The

reason some people don't enjoy or cease to enjoy salvation and being a follower of Christ is because they cease to pay the price as they ought to.

People are in trouble today because of the attitude they have been moved to. I just finished reading a letter this morning from a woman in a certain state who was stirred because she read [a message] where I lifted up a standard on modest apparel: women not wearing pants and not bobbing their hair off. Oh, she was stirred. She said that I ought to be put in the corner and shut up because God doesn't look at anything but the heart. She said that if her heart was right it wouldn't matter if all of her hair was cut off or if she went around half naked or wore pants, she would be alright. That's plain ignorance! Out of the heart flows the issues of life. It's when your heart isn't right that you want to go your own way. You want to rise up against God's standard. It isn't the things that go into a man that defiles him. It's the things that go out of him. Out of the heart comes the desire for a woman to want to look like a man. Out of the heart comes the desire. I pray God will help us to see that we are in a world that is raising up, fighting and fussing. Whether you want to see it or not, Armageddon is going on and getting more heated. The more we endeavor to lift up the blood stained banner of Jesus Christ, the more the devil is going to use his instruments to fight against it. We need to get our thinking straightened out. When we talk about discipleship, I'm talking about being true followers of Christ according to His word.

Our Best Interest

Discipleship has been designed for our best interest. Everything God gives us to live by in this Book is for my good and my best interest. Whenever I begin to get an attitude to develop within my heart and mind that God is trying to deprive me or make it hard for me, the devil has already sold me a bill of goods. I want you to get it; discipleship has been designed for our best interest. It is not designed to help God. It is designed to help us. This Bible is given to live here. It doesn't give any blessing to God when you live right. It's given to bring a blessing and protection to you and me right here. We realize that true discipleship is designed to give us the help we need. Discipleship is an opportunity to tap the infinite resources of God. I see a privilege in discipleship. What is God's attitude toward obedience and disobedience, way back when He gave the law in Deuteronomy? "If you'll hear my commandments and obey them, I'll bless you in the home, on the street, on the job, and everywhere you go. If you disobey my commandments I'll curse you in the home." There are homes that are cursed! I'm disturbed about this! People are just raising up, going to do their own thing but, oh, the curse that is on their home. Their children are lost. Their children are

on dope. Their children are wrecked and ruined; hearts are broken. You better take another look at how you took God's commandments. He never changed His mind.

Every one of those commandments that He gave were for a blessing. When I yield myself completely unto God it gives me the privilege of tapping on the internal resources of God. I would rather have everyone of you turn me down than to have God turn me down. I'm not a popular preacher, and I never will be. I have no desire to be. I want to be living where God's blessing is! When I broke my arm and it swelled up so tight that it filled my shirt, in 30 seconds when I prayed, He took it down. Ask my wife. It all went away. I could move it the very night I broke it. Heaven's resources and supply are still ours! It's governed by our attitude toward God. I want to please God above EVERYTHING else! I want to please God. What a privilege is ours!

When God gives us commandments to live by, it gives us a chance to give our lives real significance. In true discipleship, we are not doing God a favor: He is doing us a favor. Don't ever forget it! It's a precious privilege when he allows me to [live for Him]. What a favor when he looked down on me vile, corrupt, black, sinful, hateful, going to hell, and close enough to feel fires of hell! But in His mercy He reached down. He picked me up, cleaned me up, and straightened me out. He put me on the straight road and said, "Here is the pattern. Just follow this road map and you'll not get off the road." I count that a privilege! Old disgruntles sitting around and grunt at anything God asks them to do. They just need to get saved. If they get saved, they will count it a privilege to obey the Word of God and live by it.

They Watched Him

Jesus warns us to pay the cost. He lets us know it will cost us our lives but the results will be infinitely greater. Now look at the text in verse 1. *And it came to pass, as he went into the house of one of the chief Pharisees to eat bread on the sabbath day, that they watched him.* I want to say that they watched Him because He claimed to be different. He came to let mankind know that He was the author of brand new life: a life that had never been offered to mankind before. He talked to an audience that was humanly alive as you are. In John 10:10, He said, "I am come that you might have life and have it more abundantly." He began to talk in terms of a brand new life. The Gospel has been perverted today. The big end of the teaching of the Gospel is trying to get people straightened out so they can die right. The Gospel, first of all, straightens you out so that you can live right, so that you can live a different life right here. *I am come that you might have life.* Not off in eternity but right in this present world. The

minute that He comes into your heart and life, He brings a more abundant life than this old world can give to you. They watched Him because of what He declared and to see if He was genuine. It's the same reason the world is watching you and me. Get rid of this idea that it's nobody's business what you do. The world is watching you whether you want them to watch you or not. They have a right to watch you if you claim to be a Christian to see if you're genuine. People who are hypocrites start saying, "It isn't anyone's business what I do. No one has any business watching me." Well, then you don't have any business professing. Take down your profession. When you profess to be a member of the church of God, living holy and right, they are going to watch you closely. Some people may say that that makes them nervous but it won't if you start living right. If you're living right, you won't care if anyone watches. If you quit going where you shouldn't go, doing what you shouldn't do, being what you shouldn't be, and saying what you shouldn't say, you won't have to care if somebody watches. Jesus didn't care if they were watching.

Ambassadors

The Bible says that we are ambassadors for Christ. We are not only followers and disciples, but we are ambassadors, Paul said in the Corinthian letter. Being ambassadors, we claim to be in touch with reality. We claim to have received the power of Christ in our lives. We claim to be able to live as He lived. We claim to be able to follow in His footsteps. Amen. There's not a whole lot of people claiming that anymore. No, no. Holiness is being tossed out the window. They have a new brand of holiness; a perverted holiness, where you are just holy by faith. Then along comes this devilish doctrine that church of God preachers are raising up with. It's an old Baptist theory that Christ is like an umbrella between you and God. You may do wrong everyday but God isn't looking on you, He's looking on Christ and you'll make it alright. That is a lie and a doctrine of the devil. God is not looking on Christ, He finished His work. He is looking on you and I. He is looking on my heart, my mind, my walk, and my way. You and I are going to be brought into judgment with all the teaching you can have of Christ like an umbrella, shielding you from the wrath of God. God still says in II Corinthians 5:10 that everyone of us will appear before the judgment seat of Christ to give an account for the deeds we have done. With all of the coverage that false religion says that I have, I have to give an account for all the deeds that I have done. The devil is working as never before to turn you loose to live like you want to and still have faith that you are a Christian. The only Christian is a true follower of Christ.

We need to be careful how we live. Our Lord lived by principle, not circumstances. God help us to not let circumstances move us. What do I mean? Well, circumstances can

move us. The devil works through the circumstances to try us. Suppose I take my car to trade it in. I'm trading it in because it has so many things wrong with it. The dealer is going to appraise it so he asks if the car is alright. "Yes, sir! It's alright. That's a real automobile. In fact, I really hate to let it go." He gives you more than it's worth. I'm talking about living by principle or circumstance. You go away, thinking you're a Christian and that you made a smart deal. You think, "He's the dealer. He ought to know what he is doing." He just needs to be careful dealing with liars, especially church of God liars. Circumstances are moving people. How about when IRS time comes? I'm telling you something is happening to us. You pull up your self-righteous garbs because you don't drink, smoke, do dope, or go to the movies. You think you're really somebody, when you are as crooked as you can be in your dealings. Who do I mean? You! Come on, what about circumstances? Are you living by circumstances or principles? Everyday we make a choice. I don't know about you but when these circumstances arise, the devil affords opportunity to me more than ever before to cut corners. He will white wash it until it looks just right. That's why I preach so much on Paul. Why? It is only through prayer that the white wash gets knocked off and God helps you to see the thing as it really is. Are you living by principle or circumstances?

People will tell you that we are living in a different time and everyone does it. No, followers of Christ don't. They don't knowingly do wrong. If they do wrong and find out later, they go make it right. You may ask, "What does that have to do with the subject?" Everything. A disciple is one who determines from the Bible what is right. It isn't what the feeling of the world says or other saints in the congregation. There are people right in the congregation who are not spiritual and they will mislead you. The Bible tells you not to walk in ungodly counsel. What is ungodly counsel? Anything that isn't godly. The principles and teachings of God's word are still teaching what is right. See, our world is accepting things such as abortion. Your and my tax money is being used for abortion and other things that are definitely wrong. The brains of our world have decided these things are not wrong. That is just an illustration of what is going on. It comes right down to our individual lives. There is only one place to try the spirit to see if it is God or not. You go back to the principles and teachings of God's word and stand right there. Circumstances will move us.

In verse 2 of the text it said that *they watched him*. **2***And, behold, there was a certain man before him which had the dropsy.* Another mark of a true disciple is being in constant touch with people in need. This is something being lost among us. What are we here for? What are we saved for? Not to go to Heaven. If God wanted to save you to go to Heaven, He would have taken you. You are saved for service. You are here as the body of Christ. You are here to

walk as He walked. If you follow the walk of Christ, you'll see He was in constant touch with those who had need. With this old lukewarm condition that gets hold of us, the only way we hear about who is sick is when the pastor gives to you. You don't know what happened to them or if they are doing better or not. Why? There is no touch. Why isn't there any touch? Our hearts have become too crusty to feel the need. I studied that verse yesterday and it stirred me deeply. God knows I have a heart that goes out to the needs of others. There was a certain man before Him that had the dropsy. Jesus went on to teach these Pharisees that they needed to repent. One of the things He pointed out in this lesson was their self-centeredness. How do I know? They didn't like it because He healed a man on the Sabbath day but He said in verse 5, *Which of you shall have an ass or an ox fallen into a pit and you won't get them out.* How does self-centeredness work? They were more interested in an animal that they owned than they were a sick-stricken person, one of God's creatures. This goes on today. There is too much self-centeredness creeping in on the church! You are more interested in your own little affair than you are the sick, lost and dying who are right before us. I go to bed with them before me. I get up with them before me. I'm not preaching on divine healing but the needs of the world are at our feet. They are right before us. We cannot escape reality or responsibility. Being a Christian, a follower of Christ gives you a grave responsibility. People think I'm being too hard. Listen, I'm being hard enough to get you by. You're not getting by and you're not going to get by with this thing I'm preaching against. Don't forget that we are in a deceptive world. The most deceptive apostasy that has worked on the church is working on you and I. It leaves us pulling our garbs up like the Pharisees did. We are God's people but we don't bear the signs of being God's people. God help us.

Our Desires and the Price

He goes right on in verse 8 through 11, and lets us know that our appetites and innate desires are not wrong in themselves. They only become wrong when we seek to gratify them in an unscriptural way. Every passion, every desire God has given me is not a wrong desire. God gave it to me. Amen. There is nothing wrong for me to have that desire. It becomes wrong when I seek to fulfill that desire in an unscriptural way. I can give an example of that. I know that you may say that I am getting off base when I say this but I'll show you there is nothing wrong with a desire. In verse 8 through 11, He talked about being exalted and being abased. There is nothing wrong with wanting to be exalted, to be first, to be free or to be a leader. God give us some people who desire to be leaders! My heart bleeds when I think of congregations with no pastors, trying to fill the need themselves by listening to a tape. What is the trouble? We need some people with some real drive and desire to be leaders for God.

The devil will mistreat these truths and make you feel that if you even have the desire to be a leader you're wrong. You never will be one until you have the desire to be one. This is half the trouble. The reason more people aren't working for God like they ought is because they don't have any desire to. They are plenty willing to just sit and be one of the herd. I want to make it plain. Everybody wants to be exalted. Be honest.

You'll never better yourself beyond the level of living you are living if you don't have desire within you. Those drives and desires are not wrong. What Jesus is teaching in those verses is that they must be satisfied in the right way. He goes on to teach us how. The key to being first is to be sure that you're last. He gives you a way to be first. He made it very plain the first shall be last and the last shall be first. If you want to be top, work hard to be bottom. I'm dealing with scriptural ways of living. There is nothing wrong with wanting to be first but if you want to be first, make sure you're working on being last. He goes on to say that the key to real living is dying. Come to the place where you make a full commitment to God and lose your life. You'll find a new, precious life. The key to living is dying out to your own selfish ways and ideas completely. People want to live but they don't want to die. He goes on to say that the key to being free is to be Christ's slave. He teaches the key to getting is giving. If you want to get more, give more. There is nothing wrong with wanting more. Anybody who doesn't desire to have more, whether it's finances or whatever, never will. It's that desire for more that will cause you to carefully work and handle your finances. Jesus gives you the answer to that desire for more. You want to get more, give more. He goes on to teach that the secret to being a leader is to be a servant. The key to being exalted is to be humble. Now the sad part of it is that the minds of many are perverted today. They want to live but they don't want to die out to themselves completely. Many want to be free but they do not want to be Christ's slave. Many want to get but they don't want to give. This is where we run into conflict with God's word.

I want to give you a picture of God as He really is. Some people have the idea that God is sitting in Heaven thinking, "How can I make the lives of my people more miserable." Amen. This is the idea of many people. The little bit of truth that is put out makes them more miserable. I want to confess to you that God is not trying to work to make His creatures' lives more miserable. His thoughts are, "What are the guidelines I can give my people to show them how to live where they will get the most out of life they can get." That is exactly how God is thinking on your behalf. He wants us to have the most out of life. Everyone of his laws are made to help us. They are meant to make us happy and fulfilled. They are written to keep us out of trouble. I've looked many times at the grave trouble I

could have been in if I hadn't listened to God and His eternal word. It is sad but too many today want the results but will not pay the price. This is one of the sad things going on in our world. I don't know anyone who doesn't want the results of a good life. We want to be happy, free, have peace of mind and heart, and a conscience void of offense toward God and man. I could go on talking about the results of a Christian life. I don't know anyone who wouldn't like to have those results but we run into trouble when we try to have them pay the price. See, in our scheming little minds we think, "Sure it must be possible to get without giving. There must be a way I can be first without being last. There must certainly be a way to live without dying." We actually endeavor to shortcut God's rules.

Being Involved

Now, I know I'm preaching to people who do not get involved. But you are involved deeper than you think you are. Everybody is involved in something. Jesus said that you are either for Me or against Me. You either get involved in the things of God or you're not really with Me. What is the cost of discipleship? You can bring to your mind countless dozens who have been to the altar but they are not around today. What is the basic reason? They refused to get involved in the things of God. They thought they could take God's salvation and go their way and live as they did before, pleasing their own self. If you ever follow Christ, you have to deny yourself right in the very beginning and be willing to take up your cross and follow Christ.

That cross is a daily something. It is very easy for believers to become preoccupied with their own dreams, aspirations, little deals, and goals and miss God's perfect plan for their lives. Listen, and listen closely because the Spirit of God doesn't shout at people. You know when I get most of my direction from God? When I am either in prayer or studying in His word. A very slight impression (no shouting or hollering, not knocking me down), a very slight impression [will come to me]. When it reaches me, it is clear and I know it's God.

This is why the Bible says to be still and know that I am God. The enemy has us feeling that we will go crazy if we are still. It would help a lot of people stay out of trouble if they would build a porch and buy a rocking chair. You may ask, "Who has time to rock?" You would be ahead if you did. Yes, sir. You would be ahead if you would sit down for an hour or two on the front porch. Don't talk to anyone, just rock and meditate. Give God a little chance. There are too many dogs yelping in your mind for you to ever hear God. You have to get to the place of being still. Get everything else quieted and God will bring you that impression that you need to give you divine direction.

A true disciple is one who is in tune with the voice of the Spirit of God. You notice in verse 25, *And there went great multitudes with him: and he turned, and said unto them...* What is this a picture of? It is a picture of multitudes who claimed to be with Him and were not with Him at all. If we look at Christendom, it is made of great multitudes that claim to be Christian, followers of Christ, but they are not with Him at all. They will go right out and work against Him and fight His precious cause. They refuse to humble themselves and obey His word. In chapter 15 and verse 1 it says that they drew near to Him (the publicans and sinners) to hear him. There was a great multitude there with Him but there were only a few that gathered to Him to hear Him. They actually wanted to hear what He had to say. I want to say that that pictures something. It will always be this way. Christainity is a religion of rescue. It is designed for the desperate and people who are craving more than what they can get ahold of. Jesus illustrated this. Christianity is for the desperate. How many people do we reach when they are desperate? Real sickness? People dying? Loved ones in trouble? Why don't you bring your neighbors in? They are not desperate or interested. They do not have any needs. He went on in the thirteenth chapter to teach about more desperate situations including the lost coin, lost sheep, and a lost son. They woke up to the fact they had lost something and that they needed something. They got so desperate that they forgot all about what they had and went out after that which they didn't have. That's the way we get salvation. You'll find out that this thing of having people raise their hand and make a decision for Christ doesn't produce real salvation. Salvation is for people who are desperate. We have to be careful right here. You can be desperate when you are being wounded with sickness or death. You can get desperate but unless you spruce up and follow Christ, that desperate condition will wear off and the wound will be healed. You will become careless in your living and lose out for God in just a short time. Amen. It is designed for the desperate.

Counting the Cost and Holiness

Verse 26 says *If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.* He went on to say that a man building a tower is foolish if he doesn't sit down and count the cost of finishing before he starts. This is definitely a message on holiness. People may say, "You'll never know what you'll have to end up doing." Count the cost of finishing before you start. Amen. He made it very plain by showing us how to count the cost. It begins with a willingness to renounce all other loyalties in preference to Jesus Christ. This is a message that people need to learn. There is more involved in a Kingdom experience than just

receiving benefits. Thank God for the benefits we receive but the Kingdom makes some demands.

He mentioned at least three things that, unless you cut it off, you CANNOT be a Christian. There is no way in the world; you could join all of the churches in the world; get all the preachers in town to baptize you. You cannot be a Christian, a disciple, or follower of Christ unless you come to the place where you hate (in the Greek, love less) your wife, children, father, mother, home, and land. Unless you do this you cannot be His disciple. See there is a way we can live for God without natural affections conflicting with our loyalty to Jesus. Thank God for homes where there can be peace and harmony and everyone isn't saved. But sometimes in homes, we are brought to a place where there is a conflict about if you're going to be loyal to your family or loyal to Christ. Sooner or later you're going to be brought to a showdown. Many people fear right here, to make the move they need to make.

Examples of 'Love Less'

There is one sister who knows about this. Her husband was saved and is over in glory because she took a definite stand on that scripture. For a long time she came to church on Sunday morning but didn't come Sunday night because her husband wanted her to stay home with him. One morning in the service I preached on this line and God enlightened her. She went home and told her husband that she loved him as much as she ever did but her marriage to Christ comes first. Her loyalty to Christ had to be beyond that of her family. I'm not going to dwell here but there are a lot of people losing out today because they say they owe so much to their family. They run all over the country. You never see them in church on Sunday. "I owe my family something." Yeah, and you owe God more than you owe your family. Why? When you die, remember, this husband, wife, and family setup is just an earthly setup that God ordained here on this earth to provide for another generation. In Heaven we don't marry or have children. This is why we have to come individually before God. When I stand at the judgment, my good wife will not be there and neither will any of my children be there to say one good word for me. I'll stand or fall before God alone.

I remember four or five years ago, out in Oregon, I went to preach. There was a young man who hadn't been saved but a short time. He came to me the second night of the campmeeting with a question. He said, "I work with a pentacostal preacher. I asked him if I should spend half of my time going to church and half of my time with my unsaved wife or should I put God first and come to church?" I asked him what the preacher told him. He said, "He told me that my wife comes first and that I should show my love to her." I told him

that I wasn't going to tell him what I felt. I just read that verse to him. He said, "Well, I see that." He went home and told his wife. She was a very calm, attractive woman but boy, she threw a real fit. He let her know that when church time came he was going to church. He would like for her to come along but if she wouldn't she would have to sit at home. He was going to put Christ first. He came back that night and said, "My, my! I don't know if this is working right. My wife is carrying on." I said, "Yeah, that's working good. She'll probably be saved in a week." And she was. Sunday morning came and she hit the altar. She testified about the reason she hit the altar. As long as they were going along for weeks and months she didn't know for sure that he had anything. But when he came and told her that he loved Jesus more than he loved her, and that if he was making a choice to turn her down or Jesus down, he would turn her down, she knew he had something. She is in the church and working now.

I'm telling you, Jesus knows how to work. The enemy is ever working today to get you to cut corners. Today people call it 'using wisdom'. What kind? There is only one kind that comes down from above. The rest of it is earthly, sensual and devilish. Read James the third chapter. God knows how to work. I'm thinking of another brother who has gone through problems and burdens [with unsaved family] but is living to prove to that family that he loves God supremely. He can't lose for winning. I told him that the other day. You can take God at His word, live with the right spirit and lose for winning. You'll win every time.

Jesus tells us how to begin by counting the cost. If we take time to look at types, in Numbers 14 the children of Israel at Kadesh-Barnea, they were already in Canaan but unbelief caused them to send out 12 spies. Ten of them brought back an evil report and the majority ruled. They voted ten against two and they decided to turn back. Why did they turn back at Kadesh-Barnea? Because the cost of entering Canaan was too high. What was the report? "There are giants there!" In a moment of terror, people declined and turned back with the excuse, "If we go in there, the giants will kill our wives and children." Now I want to set you straight. God never promised at any time that there wouldn't be giants. He said there would be [giants]. He merely promised to assume the responsibility of a safe arrival in the fullness of the promised land if they would put their trust in Him. I say again, God doesn't promise that we will not have trials and circumstances or things that will come hard against us. Nowhere in the word can you find where if you live for God, these things won't happen to you. Thank God, you can find in the word that God will safely take you through, fight your battles, and will deliver you in every circumstance if you call on Him. These Hebrews hid behind the women and children.

Finish What You're Building

In verse 28, *For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first* ---I might ask the question, have you ever tried to build something or started to do something and failed before you got it finished? This tower (you may say is a great, high building), in spiritual terms is a towering experience. Everyone in Zion builds towers. Go about it and look at her towers. What are the towers? Zion is a spiritual city, the church. The towers are experiences that men and women have built and characters that are high. I've never seen a person yet, who was truly born again (I'm talking about the initial experience when they are in the joy of full salvation) who said, "Brother Wilson, I just want to live as low as I can. I want to live as near to the world as I can. I don't want to pray anymore than I have to. I don't want to go to church anymore than I have to." No sir. Everyone who was truly saved wanted to do it right. They want to build a *high* tower. Now Jesus said to sit down and count the cost of finishing before you start, lest you start and you're not able to finish it. God help us.

He goes on to ask about what king going out against another king---This is a picture of a Christian. You've been washed in Jesus blood and been made kings and priests. When you come into the army of the Lord, you are going out against the king of darkness, the one who ruled over you when you were out in this world of darkness. He goes on, *Or what king, going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand?* What is He talking about? He is merely letting you know that when you begin to live for God, the odds are doubled against you that you won't make it. You're fighting against an enemy that is much more powerful than all of us put together. He is teaching us that in real Christian living there is building to do. God pick you up out of the quagmire, and puts you in a heavenly place but you have to build that character. God doesn't build the character for you. No! You take the teachings of God's word through the Holy Spirit and you build your character. He teaches that in the Kingdom life there is building to do and there is battling to do. The odds, when you become a Christian, are doubled against you. Jesus wants us to see that within ourselves we will lose unless we first sit down, consult, and take counsel. Jesus stands ready to give us counsel By His counsel, it makes no difference if the enemy comes against you with an army ten thousand times the size of you, you can whip him and overcome him if you follow the counsel that God gives us through His eternal word. We can't go out here and just bounce around and win the battle. We have to put our trust in God.

Building a tower is costly. Raging a war is dangerous. Armageddon goes on and it is in a heated stage. When you become truly converted, you lay off the devils' armor and

uniform and put on God's uniform. You become a member of God's army. Right away the enemy is after you to start a battle. Don't ever forget it. The enemy is not going to let you enjoy the blessings of God sitting down. He is going to fight you through your family, friends, neighbors, people on the job, or through your employer. Some way, he is going to get at you. The point that we need to consider is that the odds are against us to the point that unless we take counsel from God's word, it is just a matter of time until we end up losers. Thank God, if we'll take counsel from God's word, no matter what the odds are [we can win]. Somebody may say, "You don't know what I'm facing." I'm not looking at what you are facing. I'm shutting my eyes to what I am facing. Sit down and take counsel.

He went on to sadly say that there will be one thing that we will do if we do not take the counsel of God. What will we do? We'll strike up a deal with the devil. How many have done this? "Devil, if you'll get off my back and let me be, I won't take such a bold stand. I won't witness and tell others." How many have got a start for God but made a deal with the devil. They thought that was the way out. We must be willing to face the costliness and danger of discipleship. It means total renunciation of self. We must offer up every precious thing if it is demanded for God's service. We must have the spirit of self-sacrifice for the sake of Jesus. He went on to tell us what it will be if we don't do that in verse 33 of the text. *So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple.*

Then in verses 34-35, He gives us a picture of those who refuse to be a disciple. He lets us know that it is salt that sweetens and preserves our society. It is salt which our world needs more than anything else today. Followers of Jesus who do not continue in the spirit of total commitment are worse than useless. What do I mean? A pastor will lose all of his hair working with this kind of people. You can't save them because they are already saved. You can't use them because they are not available. Useless people or salt that were going to be used to help society, reach the lost and be a help to those around them, [are useless because] they lost the salt or their usefulness. They have fallen to a [mere] profession. How many people are like that over the land! You can't get them saved because they say they are already saved but they don't bear the fruit of a disciple. You can't use them to work for God because they are not available. They have gone to do this, gone to do that, gone to do the other.

In the last verse (35) He says, "*He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.*" Now, why did He say that? There is a great danger that we can fail to hear the deep note of warning Jesus sounds out in this fourteenth chapter of Luke. I repeat, there is grave danger of failing to hear the warning Jesus is trying to get to us. *He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.*

I close with this. When Cortez landed and began his conquest of Mexico, he only had 700 men. As soon as he got them off of the ship and on the land he purposely set fire to all eleven ships. His men stood there on the shore of Mexico and watched the ships burn. He said, "Men, there is no means of retreat [now] whatsoever. There is nothing for us to do but go forward." I say that we need to burn the bridges. Too many hold on to good avenues for retreat. This is why people say that they were tempted to give [salvation] up. Well, you ought to have had that bridge burned. See, it's too easy for some people to go back; that's why they go back. People who are sold out for God and intend to live and finish their life for God have burned the bridges. Why? You don't need them. You're not ever going back. There is nothing left to do but to go forward. I pray that God will challenge our hearts afresh. Amen. Really take a look again at the cost and pay the price. Sell out and take counsel from God. Walk according to that counsel and he will make you victorious no matter what the circumstance is. ●

Discipleship ---- March 9, 1986 (M)

[In previous messages] we have studied and found that a disciple exhibits true humility with the mind of Christ. We found that true disciples are prayer warriors, everyone of them. Everyone of Christ's true disciples are men and women of prayer. We know that all of the basic teachings that Jesus set forth for His disciples was to get them to arrange their lives so that they could *go make disciples*. This was His closing part in Matthew 28 after He rose from the dead. He said, "Go make disciples." In this message we want to study about a true disciple's priorities. What are the priorities of a true disciple? I'm not just wanting something to talk about. These are biblical truths that I am dealing with.

To prove that Matthew 6:24 is pointed toward disciples, we go to Matthew 5:1 *And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain: and when he was set, his disciples came unto him.* All through this text are lessons for disciples teaching them how they should live, pray, and act. Farther in the text we get down to what our priorities must be to be true disciples.

Matthew 6:24-34

24No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon. **25**Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? **26**Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? **27**Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature? **28**And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: **29**And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. **30**Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? **31**Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? **32**(For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. **33**But seek ye first the Kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. **34**Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.

In this portion of the Sermon on the Mount, teaching men how to be true disciples, Jesus taught that they were to live unique lives. The word *unique* means single and one-of-a-kind. The lives of true disciples are as unique and strange (as far as the world is concerned) as Jesus was. Too many times the enemy of souls is working to get us to flare the edges. Too many are afraid of being different, separate, and what Christ would have us be. In the Sermon on the Mount, He taught and gave them the basis of living unique lives. He

taught that one great difference that sets His disciples apart is that they have different priorities than the rest of the world. This is a point we need to clean and straighten up on. We are not reaching the world like we would like to. I do not believe there is a true disciple of Jesus Christ that is satisfied with the outreach of their life. We were made disciples with one purpose in mind. We are to live, dress, act, and be so different from the world that we are salt and appetizing. There is to be something about our lives that every honest soul desires to be like us. I speak with respect and a burdened heart but we certainly need to study these things.

Jesus nailed it down through this part of the chapter that true disciples have different priorities than the rest of the world. Church, the way we handle our priorities has a whole lot to do with how we live our lives. In the text, Christ emphatically pointed out the priorities that most people (in the world) have. If we were to make a list of our priorities, some people might say that they don't know what their priorities are. Well, I could ask you to make a list of anxieties. The things you are most anxious about are the most important things in your life. You can profess what you want but the things you are most anxious about are the priorities in your life. This is a deceptive point where the enemy of souls has worked a great deception on many people. You notice in the text that He shows us what people in the world are anxious about. Food: What shall we eat? Fashions: What will we wear? Fitness: How can I extend my life? What kind of vitamins can I take? What kind of food can I eat that I can extend my life and live longer? Food. Fashion. Fitness. Families.

We could go to Luke where the same lesson is and while Christ was teaching a man came up to Him. He said, "Jesus, make my brother to divide the inheritance with me." Finances. Money. We are living in a time where Christian principle is being thrown out the window where money is involved. Yes, we are. In Matthew 6:19, He talked about finances. He said, "Don't lay up for yourself on earth treasure. The moth will get it. The rust will get it." You have heard that preached enough. A good part of the money that we have goes to clothing. We never wear them out. The Goodwill or Salvation Army gets it in good shape. Rust gets our automobiles; and if the rust doesn't get it, the thieves get it. I'm not talking about a man coming up with a gun. I'm talking about medical doctors. There are lots of thieves today. Let's put it down where it is. Many people have been put into poverty completely by the extortion going on; charging ridiculous prices. Amen. You may say that I'll get myself in trouble preaching this way but I am not afraid, by the grace of God. The Bible says to lift up your voice. Sound it out like a trumpet. Tell the people what is going on.

Pagan Priorities and Ambitions

These people Christ talked about in the text are not unusual. They could live in our day. There are some of them living right in our city. The anxieties they had then are the same things people are anxious about today. You may not think that hits you but let me jump ahead a little. What were the things these people were anxious about? Don't forget that they were pagans. He said, "These things the Gentiles----." The Greek says *pagans*. The pagan world is anxious about these things. What were you most anxious about today when you got up? What are we going to eat today? What dress am I going to wear? Be honest. Or were you most anxious about spending time on your knees where you know that you are in God's divine will to come to the house of God. If we are not careful, we can claim to be disciples of Christ and be most anxious about the same priorities of the unbelieving world. As long as that goes on, we will never catch the world's eye, let alone win them to Jesus Christ. I don't speak hard; God knows I speak with a burdened heart and concern for the cause and Kingdom of Jesus Christ. I am speaking red letters, the very words of Jesus about true disciples.

When we identify our activities, we identify our priorities. When Christ taught about their priorities, He dealt with their activities; what they were busy doing. I'm merely trying to get you to weigh your priorities. The things we put the most time in, the things we are busiest at doing [are our priorities]. Too many times this is true. We go and wear ourselves completely out in our activities and come with a worn out mind and body; you try to give fifteen minutes to God in prayer and can't stay awake to do it. Our activities will show forth our priorities. It has always been the rule and still is: we can always find time to do what we really WANT to do. Let me say it again. We ALWAYS find time to do what we REALLY want to do. I'm not going to go into detail and break it down. When He checked their activities, He was trying to get His disciples to realize that their priorities had everything to do with how they live. How they lived was going to govern whether they won the world or not.

After He dealt with their priorities, He dealt with their ambitions. He talked about things that they were really eager and concerned about. In verse 32 He said, "*For after all these things do the Gentiles seek.*" If you look at the Greek word for **seek**, it almost means 'obsessed with'. You can become obsessed in your mind. I mean something works on you and haunts you. It occupies you. He made it very plain that you are grasping after the same things that the pagans are grasping for. If we will see and own our ambition, the things you're ambitious about, you'll discover where your priorities lie. When you discover where

your priorities are, you need to evaluate them. Even the best of us can allow our priorities to get out of line.

If Paul was preaching to you (He was more stern than I am), he would tell you in his letters , “Be anxious for NOTHING but in prayer and thanksgiving...” I’m not being hard. We need to evaluate our priorities. That is why God would have me reason with you out of His Word. The first thing you know, the things that we call important are less important. Then the things we regarded as less important are most important. We begin using secondary, less important things for excuses for not doing more important things. When that begins to happen to us, our priorities have gone out of line. I pray that every true disciple of Jesus Christ will listen to this. Christ said that if we bring our priorities into line with His priorities we will start walking to a different drum beat. We will start moving to a different way. We will start living a different life. We will start affecting a lost and dying world in a great and mightier way.

Criteria

Now I used the expression *walk to a different drum beat*. I can illustrate that. It happens to me several times a week. Do you ever pull up beside someone at a stoplight? While you are sitting there, the windows are up and you can’t hear a thing. [You look over at the people in the car next to you and they are doing all sorts of funny contortions.] Right away, you know they are listening to a different beat than you are. You wouldn’t think they were driving a car. You would think they were at a disco somewhere. What is the trouble? They have tuned into a certain beat and that beat has a hold on them until it affects their life. When the drum starts beating, they start moving. I want you to see that the same thing is true with being a disciple of Jesus Christ. You get your priorities lined out, and begin to walk in step with His drum beat, you’ll walk and live differently than the world. You’ll begin to cause the world to question, “What is different about you?”

After you have been the salt of the earth, then you can be the light of the world. You’ll never be the light of the world until you have been the salt of the earth. This is where our uniqueness and winsomeness lies. We have to own the fact that every one of us needs a criteria. This is why every church [congregation] needs a pastor. I’m old fashioned. I don’t believe in this business that God is blessing congregations to run on and on without a pastor. God’s plan is a pastor to set the right beat and line up the people by giving them something to line their lives by and walk in. We need a criteria. Jesus knew we would. That’s why He sets forth these precious truths.

Criteria is something to go by. If you start to build a new home tomorrow, you don't line it up with a tree. I can remember my dad teaching me to plow. When he cut the back furrow, he would tell me to get my eye on a tree or some object. Don't look down. Look right between the horse at that object and you'll make a straight back furrow. He used to talk about the man who came to work. They told him the same thing, "Get your eye on that thing over there and drive towards it." Well, he started driving and got his eye on a cow. He was eating grass and cut a back furrow [that reflected the cow's grazing path]. We need a criteria and something to get our eyes fixed on. We need something to line up with. Again, you don't line a house that you're building with a tree. You don't square on the corner with your eye. That is the trouble now; there are too many living according to their eye and the way they see it. That's why we have so many crooked houses. He gave us a criteria. He let us know that beyond a shadow of a doubt we need a plum line, square and level. We need something to measure by. Here it is. I'm glad He gave it to us! I'm glad He didn't send us out to do it without a blueprint and the instruments we need to build in the right way.

You may ask what tools He has given us to live by. Well, Jesus was a profound teacher and in verse 33 He said, "Seek first the Kingdom!" There's the plum line, the square and level. No matter what you profess, if your priority isn't the Kingdom of God, you're not level or square. He didn't name a dozen things that we have to line up to. He preached it simply and profoundly. What am I going to measure to? How am I going to know that my priorities are right? He didn't say line up like this: first, second, third. He said, "Seek FIRST the Kingdom of God." Anyone can understand that.

The Kingdom

If you seek first the Kingdom of God all these other things that you have been anxious about will be added unto you. (I'd like to preach on the blessing that comes from putting the Kingdom first but I must hurry on.) If the Kingdom is definitely first, then entering that Kingdom and experiencing that Kingdom in our heart should be our top priority. You know what Jesus taught in John the third chapter to Nicodemous when he came to Him by night. *Except a man be born again---* Let me use the Greek. I preached last week how the term 'born again' has been defamed and devalued. So I would like to use the words that Jesus spoke. Except a man be born again, he cannot SEE the Kingdom of God; except he born from above, he cannot ENTER INTO the Kingdom. He laid words out that were very plain.

I'm sorry to say but the Kingdom of God is one of the most confused Bible doctrines. Instead of seeking the Kingdom first, people are seeking it last, believing that after they have

lived their whole life and time is over, then the Kingdom will come. I am saying, on the authority of God's word, if you are truly born from above, you'll see it. When you see it, you'll enter into it just as Jesus said. I'll give you a quick epitome of the Kingdom. Remember this, for years untold God's people had no king but God. The farther they went, the more they desired to be like the world. "We want an earthly king, like the world." God refused them and refused them. Every time a man did a great feat, they tried to make him their king. You'll read in Judges about Gideon. God took a farmer boy and caused him, through the greatness and capacity that God gave him, to overthrow the great Midianites, who had been troubling God's people. He did such a good job of cleaning them out, that in the eighth chapter, the people ran right to him. "We want you to be our king and your sons after you to be our king." He said, "I'll not be your king and my sons won't be your king. You have one king: God." It was the Kingdom of God all through there.

Man kept on carrying on. Just as God did there, He'll do today. You hold on out for your own will and way and He will turn it over to you. They cried for an earthly king until He gave them an earthly king. He gave them Saul. Following Saul there were many kings, good and bad, until they led God's people far away from the statutes and commandments of God. In Ezekiel 21:27 God said, "I will overturn and overturn and overturn until He comes, whose right it is to be the King of Israel." From Malachi to John the Baptist they never heard from God for over 400 years. That's twice as long as the United States is old. You think about it. Four hundred years and they never heard from God. All at once, a man with a leathern girdle rose up out of the Judean wilderness and people began to hear a voice. The voice they heard was, "Repent! Straighten your lives out! Get straightened out because the Kingdom of God, that we haven't had since Saul was king, is coming back again!" The Kingdom of God is nothing more than coming to the place where God definitely rules.

John was telling the people that once again God would be King. This Kingdom is also called the Kingdom of Heaven because Jesus lived as Heaven is, right on earth. He taught us in Matthew 6:10, "Pray like this: Thy Kingdom come; Thy will be done in earth just like it's done in Heaven. That's why it's called the Kingdom of Heaven and every man or woman that is born again sees it and enters into it. There is really nothing confusing about it as long as we look at it like the Word of God teaches it. True disciples understand, see, and enter into the Kingdom. They know the Kingdom is FIRST. Since they understand this, entering in and experiencing the Kingdom is a top priority. It makes no difference how long they have gone to church or how often they have been baptized or how long they've attended [a church of God congregation]. The question is, have you seen the Kingdom and entered into it? The

Kingdom is that experience wrought in the heart of men where the KING has his rightful estate and controls your life. The Kingdom is entering into God control and leaving self control; leaving world control and entering into God control. You may say that there are a lot of good people who do not see the Kingdom. You argue with Jesus not me. He said that if you're born from above you can see it and enter into it. Religion is doing a terrible work. You can prop it up all you want to, but Babylon is fallen. Fallen men are not going to show anybody the truth of God's word.

The top priority is the first of the first. He said, "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God." I want to say that the first of the first is to experience the Kingdom. I ask you, are you experiencing the Kingdom? This is top priority. This is the first thing necessary. Jesus said in John 3 that we must be born from above. To be born from above is to experience the Kingdom in your life. I'm repeating this because I want you to get it. The area of the Kingdom is where the king functions in His correct capacity. To experience the Kingdom means the KING begins to be king of my life.

This means a whole lot. I'm just going to make some bold statements. If Jesus were king of every life that claims to be Christian, there would be no division. Not an ounce. There can't be. He taught straight scripture that a house divided against itself cannot stand. Jesus cannot be king in our life and lead us in a half a dozen different ways or lead us against each other. No, no, no. There are just too many not living by this top priority. You have selfish interests. A lot of other things have crowded into the top place in your life. The first of the first is to experience the Kingdom. To experience the Kingdom means the king is reigning in your life. When you begin to experience the King as King of your life, someone from above has moved into your life from above, right down here on the earth. The king moves in and sets on the throne of your life. You begin to discover when He moves in, thank God, a whole new realm of experience. I know there are lots of things that you learn as you go but some things become new when you are in Christ.

I thought of a story that my daddy or some old minister told that clinches this point. There was a man and wife in England years ago, who people considered a little simple and illiterate. He attended the Salvation Army and got a real experience with God. He really got saved and was so happy. When he went home, his wife was happy because he was so happy. What a change had taken place in his life. One Sunday morning when he came home from service, he was sad. His wife said, "What's happened? You're sad." He said, "All them people down there where I attend church got red sweaters. I don't have a red sweater and it makes me feel so bad." So she said, "John, don't fret. I'll knit you a red sweater." She worked hard

that week and knitted him a red sweater. He went to church so happy that morning. “Oh, I’ll be so happy. I’ll have a red sweater like the rest of the people have.” He came home sad. She said, “John, what in the world is the matter?” He said, “All them people have red sweaters but they have yellow writing on theirs. I don’t have any on mine.” (You know the Salvation Army had ‘fire and blood’.) She said, “Don’t feel bad, John. I’ll try to put some yellow writing on your sweater.” She couldn’t think what to put on. She was out looking on the porch and noticed a store that was going out of business across the street. She went over and saw letters in the store window. She copied them down and knit them across his sweater. He went to church and came back so happy. “Oh, Wife! I’m so happy! Everybody loves me down there.” “Did they like your writing on your sweater?” He said, “Yes! They like my writing better than they do theirs.” You know what she had written? OPEN UNDER NEW MANAGEMENT. That’s what happens when you are born from above and the king comes in. Thank God there is new management and things have changed. You can expect a different operation because there is definitely a new management.

The King had established His Kingdom. He was born from above. ‘Born again’ means almost nothing to too many today. But to be born from above, having a heavenly birth is something out and beyond this world. When the trinity moves into your heart and life you move into the Kingdom. When you enter it, one thing has to happen. The King establishes His reign on the throne of your heart and life. When that begins, you’ll be marching to a different drum beat.

False Love

We are in a day and time [of] false love. Thank God for the true love of God but there is a lot of false love. You need to take two or three looks at that which you are calling love. There is an ecumenical love going on. I get letter after letter with judgment put on me because I won’t come down and line up with all the churches. They call me a heretic and a division maker. “You [should] love all the rest of us enough that you can lay aside all of your beliefs and come down and meet with us together.” That is as false as the devil is himself. It is gripping and taking a hold. People who do not understand true discipleship are being led away by it and falling into it. Jesus Christ was love personified. Do you see Him laying aside principles and doctrines to join up with the Pharisees? He put fire on them! He loved them while He was putting fire on them because He was telling them the truth. Love will cause you to tell people the truth, no matter how wrong they are. There is a lot going on which is definitely not love. I see it working and it makes me sick.

When this false love gets to work, it produces a day like we have now of smoothing things over. You've never seen a time when people don't want to get down to the core of things and own what they have done wrong. [They don't want to] confess it and straighten it out. They just want to smooth it over, forget about it and go on. (Amen. This is true. It was true before I preached it. It will meet you at the judgment.) We are in a day when the majority want preachers who will prophesy smooth things. What am I talking about? I'm talking about ways to smooth things over.

I had to argue with church of God preachers at the altar during the last campmeeting for something I told a woman who had been untrue to her husband. I said, "I'm not telling you when to do it but sometime you're going to have to confess that and straighten it out if you're ever going to live for God." Both preachers got on me for that saying, "God doesn't want things like that dug up." This is what I'm talking about, just smoothing it over. We are in that kind of day. You better be careful or it will work on you. Things you definitely know you need to own and straighten out but this spirit will get hold. You will think, *Just smooth it over. As long as no one is hurt I feel better.* That is where the deception is. You can cut corners on God and feel better because you did something. The devil will give you that feeling. That doesn't say you did right. [The word] is what will tell you that you did right or wrong. It isn't about feeling better or not. Too many are under this deception. They say, "I feel good about it, Brother Wilson." That doesn't mean you are right.

I'm preaching on our priorities. This is a time when no one wants judgment put on them. "Don't preach judgment, Brother Wilson. You might hurt someone." People today require no major change as long as they feel better. They want to smooth over the rough places and paper over the cracks. The tragedy is that you can smooth things over but you can never get to the place of this radical transformation that I'm talking about; where God moves in and puts His approval on your life until you do straight business with God. You mark it down. So let's not be governed by the fact that we feel better. That is a deception. The question is whether we have done it. We can smooth things over but we will never get to the place of the radical transformation that only comes when the King comes in and bears His approval. I can only come to grips with regeneration when I understand I Corinthians 6:21-22. ---*Ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, **which are God's.*** That is regeneration. Too many want to claim Jesus as King by going their own way and doing their own thing. You are truly regenerated when you come to the place of knowing that you are not your own anymore. Since you're not your own, you can't do what you want to. You must ask God. That's not too close. That is right where it is.

Top Priority

Read Matthew 6:33 again. You are not Christ's disciple if you do not seek first the Kingdom of God. The moves I make× are they going to further the Kingdom or hinder the Kingdom? We set [top] priority. *Seek first the Kingdom of God and HIS righteousness.* What does His righteousness mean? Seek first the Kingdom and His righteousness. Not only does a true disciple *experience* the Kingdom but he wants to express it. How? By living righteously before God. This is what His righteousness means. You experience His righteousness when you experience the Kingdom. You express the Kingdom when you live righteously for God. "Oh, no man can do that." Well, go over to Titus 2. *For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, **righteously**, and godly, in this present world.* What is the top priority? Seeking the Kingdom in our hearts and knowing that the King lives here. The second priority follows right behind it. After we experience the Kingdom, then we have a deep desire to go out and live righteously so we can express the Kingdom. After all that is what He saved us for. That is [the purpose] of experiencing the Kingdom. Let's get rid of this old selfishness and just wanting it so that it suits you. No, no! You experience the Kingdom so that you can express it to others. There is no way of expressing it other than living righteously before God. We have to live out what God is working. Isn't that what Paul said in Philippians 2? *Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you*×. Whatever God is working in you, you righteously work it out. You live righteously before a lost and dying world. Top priority is experiencing the Kingdom and to express the Kingdom.

Good, Right and True

There are three keywords that we need to keep continually before us if we express the Kingdom. We need to be committed to what is good, what is right and what is true. It is easy to become committed to other things like the world today. They are committed to what is popular, what is profitable, and what is comfortable. It would be wonderful if you could live with all six of these but you can't. You don't live either way until you realize that the three lock horns with the other three. You start living according to what is good, true and right and you're going to lock horns with that which is popular, profitable and comfortable. These three things get a hold of us in a great way. When they begin to lock horns, we begin to see where our priorities really lie.

I can give you an illustration that really happened. A preacher cried out in great way against abortion (and it needs to be cried against). He talked about how wrong it was. He

said that he believed that he should not only tell what is wrong about things but what is right too. So he said, "Certainly abortion is wrong. I know two or three of you young ladies in the congregation that have been entertaining the thought of abortion. Your father and mother do not even know that you are in the family way. You are in a tragic position. We have told you how wrong it is. Now I want to tell you what is right. We have several people in this congregation who are willing to take you into our homes and help you until the baby comes and after the baby comes." He got lots of amens. He said, "Raise your hands, you families, who will keep three of these young ladies." Nobody put up their hands. It's right but it wasn't comfortable. It upsets our comfort. I'm just illustrating. That is just one line.

I know what it is to not only pray with alcoholics but to bring them into my home, keep them and work with them through the night. Somebody says, "Yeah, and they stole you poor." That's right. When the police got them, they called me down and asked if I wanted to put charges against the man for stealing a lot of my property. I said, "No, I've been working for weeks trying to help him. I don't want to put a charge against him." Not everybody is guilty of this but too many are guilty of it. We don't want our program, home life or anything else upset. You want the preacher to preach what is right but you're not willing to come along as disciples and help the one that is in the wrong. You're never going to help a young person by just condemning him. The same is with condemning abortion. They are already in a tragic position. All you are doing is throwing them into trauma. It's a better approach to say, "Abortion is wrong and I want to help you. If your daddy and mother won't bring you into their home, we will bring you into ours and help you." See, what is true, good and right locks horns with what is comfortable, popular and profitable.

Another individual found a real experience with Christ. He came to the pastor and said, "I must quit the business that I am in." He was a millionaire. The pastor asked why he needed to quit. He said, "It's very profitable but it isn't right." He walked out and left millions of dollars behind him to be a true disciple of Jesus Christ. What is profitable may not always be right. There are principles to live by in the Kingdom of God.

These are just some points of how we recognize true disciples. When confronted with that which is true and not popular, if we are not careful, the spirit of the beast that has gone out into the whole world will make you feel that it is alright to lie in some cases. That is part of the doctrine of Roman Catholicism. That spirit has gone out to the whole world. A banker hired a young Christian man. He was a full, set disciple of Jesus Christ. He only worked for a few weeks before the banker called him to his desk and said, "If Mrs. So-in-So Calls, tell her that I'm not in." The young man said, "Are you going to be out?" "Well, no!" "How can I

tell her that you're not in?" "I'll fire you!" "That's alright but listen to me. If I'll lie for you, then I'll probably lie to you because I'm a liar. Do you want me lying to you?" The man said, "My God! No." He gave the young man a better position. For similar reasons I quit Owen's Corning. I was in a leadership position. When summer would come, many of them, too many, would leave about 1 o'clock to go play golf and would get somebody else to ring them out. Well they finally got around to me. I told them, "I am not going to ring you out or anybody else. If you get wrung out, you'll ring yourself out." Well, needless to say, it didn't go well, not even with the supervisor. Friend, if you lie, you're a liar. If you'll lie once, you'll lie again. And you will lie again. I know what the old cry is: Everybody is doing it. No, I have told quite a few people when they try to tell me everybody is doing it. Not everybody. Sometimes what is true is not popular. At that moment we will show our priorities.

First the Kingdom, seek first the Kingdom. Experience it. The next move is to express it. You can't express it if you don't experience it. If you're experiencing it, you will express it. It just works that way. You know the old story (over and over) of people who get saved but don't tell anybody. The first thing they know, they are telling everybody. It is something so good you can't keep. The King is the One who beats the drum of our lives and we march to His beat. This produces a different people; a people who others sit up and take notice of. I want to say that when the true disciples come to the front, there will be many, many people who want to live just like them. I feel we are wrong when we say that people just don't want the truth. People don't want religion. They are sick of it. There are plenty of honest hearts that want true discipleship. The preachers have told them that nobody lives right and that nobody can live free from sin. You go out there and live right with the principles of true discipleship, and you'll be outstanding. You will draw men and women to the experience. The devil has done his work by getting us to live short.

Seeking the Kingdom first means, "I seriously seek all that the Lord has to say to me." Matthew 24:13 *And this gospel of the kingdom shall be [first] preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.* When we seriously seek what the Lord has to say, we have the kingdom as a priority in expression, in experience and they also want to extend it. There is not a true disciple who doesn't have a deep desire to see the kingdom of God furthered. If that is not there, then you are not right, friend. If you experience it in your heart you will want to express it. In expressing it, you will want to see it extended. Every man, who gains the experience, goes quickly to try to get others.

Extending the Kingdom

When people get so comfortable in their experience that they have no vision, no burden, or concern for the extension of God's Kingdom, they are not God's disciple. You have sought that which is comfortable instead of that which is good, right and true. Such people as this need their priorities evaluated; that's why I am preaching these messages. I'm not saying in any way that you need to quit your job and go across the sea. No. What it really means is this: when you run into a true disciple, you'll run into one who has a top priority of sharing the resources that he has found in Jesus Christ that he knows that others do not have. [He does this] so that the kingdom can be extended. It is sad but people today move about because they don't like the climate. The Kingdom doesn't even enter into it. There is no thought of whether they can be a better disciple over there than here. No, they like the climate. Other's move about for a better paying job. See, that's their top priority. They have no thought of whether they can be a truer disciple and do a greater work to extend the Kingdom there. Others do this, that, and the other. I don't want to express [it all] because I might hurt someone. But too many moves are being made today with no thought whatsoever. The excuses they give are because of 'me'. "I'm tired. I'm old. I want to be free." Free from what? Free from the Kingdom. That is what you want.

Honestly and truthfully, what is your top priority? What is it? Are you definitely seeking first the experience of the Kingdom? That takes effort everyday. It isn't seeking one time at an altar of prayer. I have to seek God's will night and day, all the time I'm awake. After I find God's will, the next priority is to live out His righteousness to express it. All the time behind it, there is a burning desire to see the Kingdom established above everything else. You know that is why so many people are here [in this service] this morning. They know we don't entertain, have movies, or put on shows. They are here because they know we extend the Kingdom; that is the deep burden of our heart. We want to see men and women saved, delivered, and brought into the Kingdom experience. Then they learn the doctrine of God's word so that they can go out and extend the Kingdom of God. This is our whole business. May God help us.

I thank God for better standards of living. I am for it. I want to see you have better homes, cars and clothing. I'm glad for better standards of living. But in too many cases, we have escalated more than we have reached out. I say that with kindness and respect to everyone. We need to get our priorities straight. It's not hard. Again I say that Jesus did not line up a half dozen of things and say, "Now, get them lined up right." He gave us a criteria: seek first the Kingdom and His righteousness. We need to ask ourselves [some questions]. Am I experiencing it? Does the King truly reign over my life? Do I experience the joy and

blessedness that He said I would have? Those things that He spoke to me about my joy being full and His joy remaining in me? Is it there? Am I experiencing it? Am I expressing it? Lastly, am I fully committed to the extension of it?

If we do these, other things will fall into place. I mentioned five of them. What is it that the world is anxious about? What will we eat? When we fall into line experiencing, expressing and expanding the Kingdom, we will watch our eating. Why? We must glorify God in our body. I know that if I overeat and carry a lot of weight around, I will become sluggish and I won't be able to be my best for the Kingdom. It will affect your relationship with your family. If you seek the Kingdom first, thank God, it will bring you into a relationship with your family that you never enjoyed. Everyone of those five things that Jesus said He would add unto you, He will add them unto you if we get our priorities straightened out. It will even affect the clothes you wear. When you have a Kingdom experience, it will affect your whole being. Our priority will be the Kingdom.

How are we going to find true disciples? They walk to a different step. They are walking to a different drum beat. Their priorities are all together different from the world's. [Don't be sad.] I'm merely trying to help you find the true disciples. "Well, I don't think you have to live like that!" Well, you are not the Master. This is the way that the Master said [disciples] live. He called them together on a mount. He has called us together [for this message] and taught us what true discipleship is.

The Mark of True Discipleship ----June 16, 1986

We are living in a day of identity crisis. I mean a time when people say they are one thing and don't know they are something else. I know that is a principle of the letter to the Laodecians but the principle is far reaching. The only thing that will straighten us out is to get back to the real discerner, the thing that discerns the sheep from the goats and points out the good or the bad tree. You can't sit under the word of God, declared under the anointing of His Spirit, without knowing your true condition. People come in and say, "I came to the church of God feeling pretty good." When that man got done, I could hardly drag myself out." People come and tell me that. I guess they think I'm going to change the preaching. [Instead] I say, "Thank God. It is still working." You're not supposed to feel good if you're bad, not where the word of God is preached. If you are good and right, you'll go out more blessed than when you came in. You'll go out more certain of your experience than when you came in. That is what the word of God is for. Jesus taught a plain Gospel that was understandable to the people He dealt with. He likened all mankind to two trees. He told us when we preach to make the tree good or make the tree bad. Now you and I aren't changing the tree; we are just bringing out its true reality. Get rid of the inbetween and confusion. Get rid of this business that says, "I hope I'm alright." Make the tree good or make it evil. Don't leave people hanging. He brought in a real note of holiness right behind that when He said a good tree CANNOT bring forth evil fruit. You can't be an evil tree and have evil things coming forth from your life. James preached the same thing: one fountain cannot give forth good water and bad water. We are one or the other. He went on to say that you would know if you were a good tree or a bad tree by the fruit. We do what we do because of what we are. There is no need to deal with what people are doing; you need to get down and deal with what they are. [They need to be changed.] There are too many issues; Jesus didn't come and deal with the issues. The old Law dealt with the issues, man's transgression. When Jesus came, He came as the great Physician. He said, "The problem is that you have heart trouble." It is right in the heart where all of these things proceed from. Get a new heart and there will be different issues that come from it. If what we do does not come out of what we are, we are living a fraud. You may not agree but there are too many who do not truly know who they are.

I want to go back to some basics and study some of the marks of true discipleship. We are in a very confused time. There were people in Jesus' day who let Him know that they were Moses' disciples. They made it very plain that they were not Jesus' disciples. There were others who were John's disciple that Paul had to straighten out and rebaptize. Then they became Jesus' disciples. Today we have people following the beast, Roman Catholicism, and

say they are following Jesus. They are not following Jesus; they are following the beast into perdition. We have countless others who are following that beast that looks like a lamb, Protestantism. They think they are real followers of Christ. If they sat under the word of God, they would find they are not followers of Christ; they are following a beast that looks like a lamb. A deception is moving upon them. I could go on and on. Some people are disciples of their own flesh, following their own ideas. I just want to go to the word of God and study a little bit of what discipleship really is.

Nickname of Antioch

In Acts 11:26 it says *And when he (Barnabas) had found him (Paul), he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people. And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.* The word Christian is only used three times in the Bible. Each time, it was used as a nickname and in jest toward the people of God. I don't want to upset you right in the beginning. What you don't understand, go meditate on and pray about it. Historians agree that the people of Antioch were famous for using jesting names. When emperor Julian came to them, they called him 'the goat' because he had a goatee. I could tell you of many other jesting names. (I joke with my congregation, if we get too many beards around. I tell them, "Tonight I'm going to preach on that famous scripture: *What must I do to be shaved?*") There people were full of jesting names. When the disciples of Christ were in Antioch, they watched them and brought up a name for them. The name they gave them was Christians. It actually means 'these Christ folks'. They acted like Christ so they called them 'these Christ folks'. Now you don't need a preacher to tell you that the word Christian has been and is being defamed. The word Christian is given to almost any condition today. I get sick when I hear the radio say that they are going to give us some Christian rock. There isn't such a thing. Most everyone is a Christian today. There are people who say they are Christian because they live in America. I am not being too technical but the text said that the people of God had a name before they were called Christians. They were disciples. That is what Jesus called them and that is what they called each other. The word disciple means 'a follower of Jesus Christ'. Take that name and you will find that it has a much deeper meaning than the word Christian.

Read in John 8:31 (If you don't mind, I will quote it from the Amplified.). **31** *So Jesus was saying to the Jews who had believed Him, If you abide in My word [holding fast to My teachings and living in accordance with them, then] you are truly My disciples.* Christ is still speaking right through the word in the midst of this conglomerated condition. Christ is still saying, "Many of you think you are my followers but if you are my followers, you will continue to abide in

my word and observe my teachings; you'll live by them and practice them every day. Then you are my disciples.”

What is a disciple? A disciple is one who faces the issues that Jesus raises and meets the conditions of those issues. You may say that you know that you are a disciple. You are going to know it more when I get done. I get leery of people who say, “I know I'm a disciple! I don't need to hear all that preaching.” Look out. There isn't one of us who knows our true condition except with what God shows us but His word. We can think and believe a lot of things. Any experience that stands up against the preaching of God's word is not a true experience. God leads you in a pathway of victory.

Mark 8:34 shows some of the issues that Christ raised. Let's see if we can face them and live by them. Anywhere Jesus gathered a crowd, He thought they were following Him. He turned and said, “Hold it. You can't be my disciple unless you do this.” He wasn't like a modern preacher. Preachers will do almost anything to get a crowd. He gathered a crowd but when He got them together, He told them the truth. When He told them the truth, He didn't have anyone left except for His disciples. That's all you're supposed to have left! The straight teachings of God's word will leave nothing but His disciples. I know you're a greater teacher than Jesus. You have a way of doing it so that you can still hold a crowd. I [could] mention about 10 chapters where there was a crowd [in the Bible]. One time there were gathered until they were too deep and trod on each other to see. He saw that it was a flash in the pan. There was nothing real to it. He turned and said, “Unless you forsake father, mother, houses, land, children, and everything for My sake you cannot be My disciple.” The disciples said, “Don't you know the Pharisees got offended at your hard preaching?” He said, “Let them alone. Don't go pet them or invite them back. Let them alone.” I know when I preach this way, I'm not using love. But Love personified said that. If you let them alone, God will deal with them. If you go around petting them, you'll mess them up.

Denying Ourselves

Mark 8:34 And when he had called the people unto him with his disciples also, he said unto them, Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. These are three definite things that we have to obey and abide by to be Christ's disciple. There is no other way. He didn't set up a hard line. He set up the necessities for you to be able to follow Christ. He wants you to count the cost before you start. If more people counted the cost before they started we wouldn't have so many give up in the middle of the race. This verse could be preached 20 thousand years and wouldn't wear it threadbare.

Serving God is individual. Jesus said to the rich man, "Give away all you have." That wasn't for everybody; it was for him. He doesn't tell everybody who comes to Him to give away all they have. That money was His hangup. He knows where your hang up is. He may tell you to get rid of your telephone. (I heard one man say that Paul Revere could have saved himself a hard ride if he would have just told his wife.) God has individual requirements. There may be things in your life that wouldn't bother me a bit but you cannot follow Christ as long as it is in your life. Jesus brings it down in personal measure to every life. In this message, I'm preaching how without these three things, it is impossible to be a disciple of Jesus.

He said first that *he must deny himself*. This point has been so confused. Not long ago, we went through a Lent season where people deny themselves of this and that: a package of chewing gum, two cigarettes, ice cream cone, pound cake. They are going through Lent. Get it straight; Jesus was not talking about denying yourself OF something. He was talking about denying YOURSELF. Why does He make this so plain? There is no way in the world that I can follow Christ unless I deny my own will completely. There must be a denying of ourselves, our way, our feelings, and our desires before we can follow Christ. This applies to all the divisions. In Acts 2 it says that they were in one accord in one place. I wonder what would happen if everyone who claims to be the 7th seal church of God would get together in one place. We would have a fuss like you have never heard of. After just one message, there would be a brother who would grab you at the door and away we would go. This is what God is looking on and this is why His Spirit is not being poured out like we want to see it. There must be one accord in one place. I know they did not agree on all of the doctrines because they didn't understand them all. They didn't even see the Kingdom; they didn't understand tongues, the hair, or the dress questions. But they were in one accord in one place. Being in one accord is so needed and it goes right along with denying ourselves. The reason we have divisions amongst us today is because people want to have their own way. They haven't denied themselves yet.

This is about saying NO to self every moment of the day and yes to God. Self-denial is not a condition you meet at the altar of prayer. It is an experience you live out day by day. It doesn't matter if you call yourself Christian. We each have a self that doesn't go along with God and His way. There is a body that must be brought under; brought under the divine teachings of God's word. There is someone for us to deny everyday all the way. It means to dethrone self and enthrone God. If you're on the cross, Jesus is on the throne. The work of God is suffering from a spiritual and financial standpoint. It all stems back to people not starting with the first aspect of real discipleship: denying ourselves. To deny self is to obliterate self as the dominant principle of your life and make God the ruling principle. It is

to say no to our own natural loves for ease and comfort. I don't want to hurt anyone this comes to me right here. Thank God we are able to put up a building with air conditioning and wide doors for wheelchairs. We thought we could take care of people coming in and get a message, faith and help to them. But I declare, it starts in February. Hundreds of people are sick and need that dormitory. The sister [who works there] said, "I'm overcrowded. I've got enough to fill it half again." I said, "We are going to have to preach a lot on divine healing. I've never seen so many sick people." When you boil it down, not everyone of them are sick, they are just not willing to deny themselves of some ease and comfort (preachers, too).

This is why you don't see more on the mission field. You might take a vacation and go look but I mean ones who get right out there and live like the people live. I've done it and I know what it is. About the second time I was in the Philippines, the brother there said that we had seven hundred miles to make on dirt roads. You say he couldn't make them but you've never rode with him. He scared my wife so badly that I didn't know if I was going to have a live companion when I got there. There were fourteen of us that slept there. I broke through. The brother really laughed. He said, "Come back again, Preacher. I'll put a new floor in before you get back".

Too many are just not willing to deny themselves. Let's just get down to where we are living. We have been so pampered and petted. We live in such ease and luxury. You may think that you don't live in luxury but you sure do. You pay a luxury tax. Nobody pays a luxury tax except the people who live in luxury. We need to come back and look at these things. We can have all night prayer meetings and pray for God to pour out His Spirit. God is looking down and saying, "I'm just looking to find some people in one accord where I can pour out My Spirit in a mighty way. Those people were in one accord with God and each other. The preachers were in one accord. When Peter stood up, the eleven stood up with him. They didn't have the least idea what he was going to preach but they were in one accord. There are some things that we have drifted away from that are causing us to desire God to move and God is not moving. We must deny ourselves.

Our self is the only person who can really cause me trouble. If I'm not having the victory I ought to have, I can't blame anyone else. I know we are in a day and time where we blame the preacher and the church. I went to visit people who were cross roads the other day. They said, "There isn't anything there anymore." When I got through, he realized it wasn't that there isn't anything here but that he didn't have anything to get in. You are the worst enemy you have and you're the only person who can keep yourself out of Heaven. No man can stand before you; God gave you a clear run. But self can raise up and cause you to miss. There is no one to blame.

Self Denial

Some people say they get so worked up at other people. You need to stand in front of the mirror and stick your tongue out at yourself and say, "I hate you!" You may say that is hard but He said, "Unless you hate your own life." It is pretty hard to hate someone that you fix up, wash up and dress up. I had one woman who got stirred up at me. She said, "Well, if I'm not going to look after myself, who is?" I said, "God." You quit looking after yourself and God will look after you. This the blessedness of salvation; where the joy comes. I don't have to look out for myself. In the Old Testament type, God said, "I'll fight your battles." You don't have to fight them." You may ask, "We don't have to battle in the New Testament? I thought it was a battle." He tells you what to do. Put on the whole armor of God. He didn't say put on the whole armor and then fight. He said to put on the whole armor and then stand and watch God fight. You have to fight the good fight. The good fight of what? Faith! That you can keep faith. The enemy is out, through the powers of unbelief, to get you to lose your faith in God. When you get that in your head, that God isn't going to take care of it, then you try. All you do is lose your own experience. We have to deny self.

To deny self is to say no to every course of action that is based on self seeking or self will. To say no to self is to say no to the instincts and desires that prompt us to touch, taste, and handle forbidden things. Self-denial will keep you out of sin. Why? It is self that wants to touch this and handle that. Self-denial is the ground work of living holy. We must be able to say with Paul, "It is no longer I but Christ." Too many are keeping their 'I'. I was riding down the road the other day and saw a bumper sticker that said, "Christ is my co-pilot." I told my wife that that isn't so. Christ is the Pilot. This is where we have trouble. We want to be the pilot and Christ to be the co-pilot. We get in trouble and cry, "Oh the winds are blowing! Won't you take over?" There is something better than that. Make sure He has the wheel before the storm comes. No longer I----Here is self denial.

A dear sister who got wonderfully saved was telling about her husband. I quoted her a scripture and told her that if she really lives self-denial, make sure that it is no longer her but Christ. When your husband starts sleeping and eating with Jesus, how long is he going to be able to put up with that? There is too much of us sticking out and self hanging on. We have Jesus wrapped up in self but people can't see Jesus for seeing us. They are sick of us. They want to see Jesus. John's gospel described the Jews having that big feast where some Gentiles came into the midst. They came into the midst even though they weren't welcome and said, "Sir, we would see Jesus? We don't want ceremonies or meetings. We want to see Jesus." There is the cry of every honest heart over our land. There are millions who are sick of religion and won't come to the church. But they are not sick of Jesus. The man who lives in self-denial no longer follows his own will but the will of Christ.

Take Up His Cross

The second thing, after denying himself, is to take up his cross. Many people do not understand this. When Christ speaks of taking up His cross here, He is saying we must take up our burden of sacrifice for the work of God. The real disciple's life is the life of sacrificial service. This is what Paul was talking about. People try to use this scripture to prove once in grace always in grace. But get the essence of what Paul was talking about in Romans 12:1. *Present your body a living sacrifice acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.* Sacrificial service. Presenting your body, your very being, as a sacrifice. The old sacrifices were burnt up and consumed to the end. But you present your body a living sacrifice everyday you live, over and over. "Here I am Lord. Not my will." James preached it this way. Don't begin to say, "I'm going to go to college and get an education. I'm going to go over here and make money." Don't begin to say that until you say, "If the Lord be willing." Living by the will of God, your body has been presented with a living sacrifice that is used over and over and over. He said it is your reasonable service. There is nothing unreasonable about it. People today think it is unreasonable when you talk about giving up completely to Christ and start living according to sacrificial service. They think the requirements are just too high for the run of the herd but it is still the requirements of being a true disciple of Jesus Christ.

The true disciple will have to abandon personal ambition to follow Christ. I have dealt with people enough to make this next statement. There are too many people who feel it is just too much to give up to go to a mission field or to raise up a congregation. This is one reason why there are congregations without pastors. One sister told me there isn't a place in [her] town where the truth is preached. She said, "Brother Wilson, won't you or somebody come? Let's get a work started for God." Why isn't this being done? Too much sacrifice. I have actually heard people say, "I don't want my child to be a preacher. They have to put up with too much and put up with going without so much." Well, get it straight. God doesn't have one standard for preachers and another for saints. You may not preach the Gospel but you have to live just as sacrificial a life as the man who preaches the Gospel. That taking up your cross is the sacrificial service that one must put forth if they are a follower of Jesus Christ.

You won't live for God very long before your plans will be altered. My children got let down so many times, I wondered if they were going to grow up hating the church. I would have them all in the car to have an evening with the family and the phone would ring. "Brother Wilson, I need help." "Get out of the car, children and go back to the house. Daddy has to go." I'm just illustrating but that is life. A real child of God can't make too many programs out ahead. How can you program way ahead if the Lord be willing if we make our programs, and tell you what we are going to be doing a year from now? People say, "In

eleven months, I'm going to retire. I've already got a home down in Florida. I'm going to take it easy." Whoa, whoa, whoa. There is a rich man in the Bible who used those same words and he went to hell that night. We have left God out of our plans. These are basics, the abcs [of discipleship]. If you don't deny yourself, you will never take up your cross because self won't let you. *Whosoever will come after me...*

If any man will come after me, he must deny himself, take up his cross and follow me. The true disciple will have to abandon personal ambition to follow Christ. For the true disciple, oftentimes, the reward is small and the prestige is nonexistent. To be a true follower of Christ, we have to sacrifice time, leisure and pleasure. We take that which we have sacrificed and use it for the good of a lost world. See the Bible tells (it's a command to) everyone to visit the fatherless, the widows and the sick. Now, we pay the pastors to do it. You're not getting by. That is part of pure religion and true discipleship. Where is the old time desire to visit? How long has it been since you, child of God, have visited the fatherless and the widow? See, we just threw that scripture out the window. "It's not a necessity," we say. But it still makes up a part of pure religion. Why aren't we reaching the world? Our visitation program has fallen to pieces. We are not reaching the world because we lost contact with the world. You have to take up your cross of service, reasonable service. There is nothing unreasonable about this.

Many times, the comfort of home, enjoyment of the family and places of entertainment must be sacrificed. I'll tell you that it is a cross when you could have gone and enjoyed something and some fellowship with people you like to be with and Jesus says, "No, not that way. Go over to visit this sister who is really grumpy. She may die one of these days and she needs help. She has to know first of all that you care for her. If you don't go see her, she isn't going to know you care for her. You can tell her all you want." A brother was preaching about God doing the things we *can't* do. When will God start doing it? He'll start doing the things we can't do when we start doing the things we *can* do. If we are going to follow Christ, we may have to sacrifice things that we could well and easily possess to give more to the needy, even to people who do not deserve it. I get sick of hearing people say, "I'm not sending money across the sea. Those people don't deserve it." How deserving were you when Jesus picked you up? How much did you deserve help? There are many spirits that have gone out. They can get a hold of you if we are not mighty careful. The first thing you know, we are not going to help anybody. You know what I tell people? We give a lot. There isn't a taxi cab driver in town that if he picks up a bum, won't tell them, "Let me take you out to Reverend Wilson's. He will help you." Somebody may say, "That is awful." But I am glad. "Don't you know that you help a lot of people who are not worthy?" I suspect I do. I preach to a lot of people who aren't worthy of my message. I can preach that to you out of the Bible

in Hebrews. Somebody may say, "What is your standard?" Well, I do my best to look into it, especially when we are paying electric bills or anything of great size. When it comes down to it, I use this rule. Jesus said that I might entertain an angel unawares. So I'll feed six bums so I don't miss an angel. One of them might be an angel, I don't know. I know this: He said I would entertain them unawares. I won't know them when they come. Our giving (thank the Lord for what you give) could go up 100% in missions if there was more real sacrificial living. You want to go away (I don't say anything is wrong about that. I believe in vacations. Jesus said to pull away for a little while. I advocate that. I know that it is necessary to rest away from the strains of Christian work.). We say nothing sometimes to go and spend \$50 at least a night for a motel and \$25-30 meals for two of us. We come back with about \$600-700 gone and say "We had a good time." We come into the service and Brother Wilson says, "We are going to have a special mission offering." You say, "Do you have change for a \$5?" Come on! God is looking on and you don't have Him fooled. He is looking on. Sacrifice is an extreme today when it is a normality of real discipleship. Sacrifice is the norm. We need to sacrifice things that we easily possess to give more to the needy. Mark it down. The life of a true disciple is a sacrificial life.

Jesus, in Mark 9:23, was afraid that we wouldn't understand it. So, He put *daily* in there. Let him pick up His cross *daily*. It isn't a Sunday work. It's a daily work and life lived consistently day after day. This is the thing the world doesn't understand. You might say to give 'till it hurts. No, give until it quits hurting, then you have joy. That is the trouble now. People are giving until it hurts and labor until it hurts. Move out and labor and give until it quits hurting and you find joy in doing it for God. Jesus put *daily* in there because He does not want great moments of great sacrifice. Thank God for the great moments of sacrifice. But He wants a life lived constantly, hourly, and daily with the awareness of the demands of God and the needs of others. I know you know it well. You weren't saved for yourself. You were saved for others.

The third thing a disciple must do [is in Mark 8:34]. He must deny himself and take up his cross, willing to take up sacrificial service for God. [Next], he must follow Jesus. *And when he had called the people unto him with his disciples also, he said unto them, Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.* When Jesus said that he must follow Me, it means that he must render to Christ perfect obedience. Have you ever played Follow the Leader? You do the best you can to do what the leader does. I told the young people before that that game got me into some awful things as a teenager. I remember one day the Licking River was flowing clear out of its banks at a terrific speed. We went up to the river playing Follow the Leader. The next thing I knew, the leader peeled off his clothes and dove in. It was February. Well, I dove in. That river was so swift that I ended up about a half

a mile down the river on the other side. I was swimming as hard as I could swim. I followed the leader. Now this isn't a game but we are following the Leader. This is the way we have unity and go together. The disciple is not greater than his Master. He said, "*If I, your Lord and Master have done it, you ought.*" We must follow in His steps wherever He leads.

Dangers

If you go on in Mark 8:35 it reads *For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it.* He begins to point out some dangers along the way. One of the greatest dangers we have as followers of Jesus Christ is the temptation to save our lives. I spoke on denying ourselves. Now, He said that if we lay down our life and spend it freely for His sake and the Gospel's, we'll save it. But if we try to save our life, we'll lose it. Here is a temptation. If you'll realize Mark's gospel was written about AD 90. Bitter persecution was beginning. Many were tempted to recant and back off to save their lives. I'm sure these words meant more to them than to us but I want you to see that the time will come when you can save your life by abandoning the faith. You can save yourself a lot of trouble presently by backing off of the words of Jesus Christ. You can save your reputation and a fellowship with the world. There are many things you can save by backing off the standard and the words of Christ. We need to watch this temptation of saving face. Some people have actually backed down to save face.

He said in verse 35 *For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it.* 36 *For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?* He brought up a second temptation of worldly gain or a profit that this world can give you. [We can] lose our lives to worldly gain. There are people who are bouncing all over the country because of employment. They are not getting their soul fed. They are not even in a place where they can hear the Gospel preached. Worldly gain. It is a danger. It stands for material things that are opposed to God. Christ is here talking about life. He said that whosoever shall save his life shall lose it and whosoever is willing to lose his life for His sake and the gospel's (Now there is a people who are sold out. Material prosperity has nothing to do for them.) shall find it. Christ is talking about life and he goes right on and asks what it would profit a man if he gained the whole world and lost his soul. What will a man give in exchange for his soul? Think about it. There is nothing a man can give Christ in place for his life. Too many today try to give money and withhold their life. Too many try to give lip service and withhold their life. The first possible gift you can give to God is yourself. If there is any selfishness in your life, you will give almost anything before you give yourself. There are many things you can give beyond yourself but that is the starting place. The first gift that you can give to God and the church of God is

yourself. There is no substitute for giving yourself. If you read the first five verses in II Corinthians 8, Paul talked about how poor the people in Macedonia were. But in their poverty they were moved to great liberality. They gave more than a lot of churches that had money. He told you why. They did it because they first gave themselves to God and to us. There is not enough of giving ourselves to God, the pastor and the church. Amen! Come on. Everyone is so scared of man rule that they do not let the pastor have his rightful place. Paul said they gave to God and *us*. A pastor cannot guide and lead people unless you give yourself to him. It is so! "Oh, I have the Holy Ghost!" Well, if everybody knows the way, why does Christ say we need a leader? Let's brush up on this. "Ain't no man going to lead me!" How are you going to get to Heaven? God has ordained that everyone has a pastor. A pastor is not some hard fellow. Read it in the fourth chapter of Ephesians. He is a gift of God. God gave pastors for the good of the church; for the edifying and building up of the church; for instruction. "Well, I'll get mine out of the Book myself." No, you won't. You'll never get out of the Book what God wants you to get through the pastor. We are withholding ourselves. There is too much room between the church and the pastor. Why was the church in Macedonia able to be so liberal in their poverty? They had more to give than people who had plenty to give. Paul gave the secret: they first gave themselves to God and us. Then God blessed their giving until their liberality in giving was a memorial that Paul would have all churches look upon. There is no substitute for giving ourselves.

Christ, speaking of his death in the eighth chapter of Mark, was near the cross. He said that He was going to be rejected by the elders and chief priests and be killed. After three days, He would rise. Yet, He was absolutely sure that every bit of it would end in triumph. He let them know that He would triumph over all. He was loyal to those who had been loyal to Him. His mind has never changed. He is ashamed of those who are ashamed of Him. He taught that. You'll notice here that He is talking about going into their town. He speaks of them as an adulterous and sinful generation. We know that there was much loose living going on then. There was literal adultery and fornication. But when He called people who would not take and abide by His words an adulterous and sinful generation He isn't talking about literal adultery. He has a deeper meaning. Isaiah 54:5 reads *For thy Maker is thine husband; the Lord of hosts is his name; and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel; The God of the whole earth shall he be called.* Jeremiah 31:32 reads *Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the Lord.* A similar scripture can be found in Jeremiah 3:20. I could jump to the New Testament II Corinthians 11:2-3. There Paul said, "*I have espoused you to one husband, church of God.*" Now, when Christ spoke of this adulterous and sinful generation being ashamed of Him and His words, He said that He would be

ashamed of them. When we are ashamed of Him and His word and go after other loves and ways we are branded as an adulterous and sinful generation. This is what He was talking about. Read the verse right before it in Mark. When we refuse His word and love, we are an adulterous and sinful generation; we go after other loves and other ways. He spoke of us as an adulterous and sinful generation. God, help us to see that we must be careful. We can get caught in the spirit of the age.

Deceitful Spirit of the Age

What is the spirit of the age? It is living for the present with the shade pulled down about the future. It is living for the best we can get out of life right here without too much thought of how it is going to affect us in eternity. The devil has people deceived into thinking that what they are doing must not be too wrong or God would stop them. No, judgment isn't quickly executed and because of this the hearts of men are set on doing evil and going on. Like Peter, I stir up your minds by the way of remembrance. When the spirit of the age gets a hold of us, what happens? We become blind; not blind that we can't see but blind that we cannot see far off. We can't see anything but our own needs and our own blessings. We can't see the needs of others. All effort is put into our own coffer, to bring us our own pleasure, and to fulfill our own desires.

Too many are not living with that blessed day in mind. *Well done, thou good and faithful servant. Enter into the joy of the Lord.* How long has it been since you thought upon that? This is a very deceitful time. I agree with the message that the last days are from the days of Christ to the end of time. I do not believe that the scripture dealing with perilous times was just dealing with a certain period. II Timothy 3:1 says that in the last days perilous times. Plural. There are good times that the church has gone through. There are also perilous times. When you go preaching on that, people will say that that was in Paul's day and it is all over. But he didn't say a perilous time would come but perilous times. What brings these times on the church? Paul tells us in II Timothy 3:1. *This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. 2 For (or because) men shall be lovers of their own selves.* That is the most perilous thing that can ever hit us. The church is suffering more from that today, than all the worldliness and ungodliness that is going on out there. It is terrible but our real hurt and suffering is because too many have become lovers of their own selves. They are not willing to deny themselves. They are not willing to take up the sacrificial life that this calls for. The outgrowth of it is that we have lost our homes. Our children are disobedient. There are many other things too, but it all hangs on that *for*.

I believe we are living in a very deceitful time. I believe it was deceitful [before]. I believe the devil has been working since the Garden of Eden. Don't get me wrong. But let's

look at this deceitful time. It lays heavy on my heart. Luke 9:55 says *But he turned, and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of.* Now, I'm here to tell you that there are many spirits gone out. They have gone out to the whole world. We don't have to play around too much to invite a wrong spirit of one kind or another. Using your own human reasoning to too great a degree will invite a wrong spirit. If you back up in text, Jesus set His face to go to Jerusalem but He wanted to go to Samaria. The Samaritans so hated the thought of anyone going to Jerusalem that they were stirred up. When they were stirred up Peter and John said, "Lord, you want us to call fire down and destroy them like Elijah did?" Oh, they used the Bible here. Jesus said, "You don't know what spirit you're of." He didn't just say they had a wrong spirit but that *they didn't know* what spirit was working on them. This can happen to you and me.

I want to make it plain and concise. Saint of God, when any kind of thought like this begins to work in your mind, you don't know what spirit you are of. If somebody does you wrong and you say, "Well, I hope they have a wreck or their house burns down." "I can't wait until God gets even with them." "You just wait. I'm just living for the day when God pours judgment out on you." You may have lived for God for a long time but a wrong spirit got in there somewhere. A true child of God does not want heartache, misery, or accidents to come to anyone, no matter how much of an enemy they are or how much they have accused them. They never, in no way want harm to come to them. I remember a preacher saying (It was never made right. It is up to him), "Brother Wilson, preaches so straight about divine healing. I can't hardly wait until he gets in the hospital. Then I'll laugh." Church of God preacher? No, he claims to be but that is not the spirit of Christ. Jesus rebuked them. He still tells pastors to rebuke. We are almost past it but we must rebuke, sometimes openly, so that others may not sin.

Oh, the spirits we put up with today. Hateful spirits, undermining spirits and hypocritical spirits. They work one way to your face and another way behind your back. The message still is that too many do not know what kind of a spirit they are of. I want to put the emphasis on the *you know not*. This thing is deceptive. We have people who will stand up and say, "Thank God, I have been saved for forty or fifty years." The very spirit they are manifesting is letting you know that they aren't even saved now. What am I preaching on? True discipleship and what it means to be a true follower of Christ. How easy it is. John was that one that loved him. He laid on His breast but he let the wrong spirit get a hold of him. I'm going to hit it again. Whenever there is any spirit about you that wants to hurt or destroy or that wants to see others hurt because they misused you, there is a wrong spirit that has started working in you somewhere. You better get rid of it or it will wreck and ruin you.

I've been put in some embarrassing situations. I remember in the old barn a preacher got to the end of his message and (the big dormitory at another church had burnt down) he said, "I just heard their building burnt. I hope the whole place burns down." I had to jump right up and say, "Hold it! Hold it! That is his thought; not ours. We don't want anyone's place to burn down." The fire that God puts on Babylon is not a fire that burns their buildings down. What kind of fire is it? The kind that is coming across the pulpit right now. Let the building be; put the heat on the people. *You don't know what kind of spirit you are of.* This needs to be preached from one end of the country to the other. Our congregations have too many people in them who do not know what kind of spirit they are of. They are deceived. They tell you they are sold out to God and really working for Him. All the time the devil is using them to hinder the work of God. Jesus rebuked them and told them that they didn't know what kind of spirit they were of.

What is the lesson? It is possible for the devil to use us. In Mark 8:31-33 Jesus began to tell the disciples where He was going. Peter took Him and began to rebuke Him. Jesus began to rebuke Peter saying, *Get thee behind me, Satan: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men.* In the Amplified Bible, it says that [Peter] didn't have the mind that promoted God's will. The mind Peter had was pleasing men. He wasn't on God's side. He was on man's side. Why do I bring that up? To show how conditions can move us to a wrong attitude and wrong spirit. Peter was relating to the low world, the one that now is, more than to the upper world, the life to come. Jesus said that Peter thought in terms of men, our own credit, our own ease, and our own safety, more than the things of God. This is a very great sin and the root of much more. It is a sin that is too common among Christ's disciples today. It appears in times of suffering and temptation. If we are not careful, our very thinking and prayers will be the things of men. James 3:15 says that this wisdom does not come down from above. He says it is sensual, human, and devilish. Why did Peter say, "You'll never go to Jerusalem! They will never do that to you!?" He did it because he loved Jesus. You have to be careful about how far your love reaches [that it doesn't get in the way].

Let me illustrate. When I was so sick around the yearly business meeting back in January, my wife, because she loves me, talked to me for about a week night and day. "Just tell them at the business meeting that you are done. You have been faithful for 32 years. Now save a little bit of your life. We will travel, go to the mission fields and we'll enjoy life." It sounded good. She said it because she loved me. After I got alone with God and prayed, I had to tell her, "You're talking about the things of men, not the things of God." That is what man likes to do. That is not what God wants. We must be careful of the things of men, our own thinking, prompted by real love.

I have been in a sick room, dealing with the Bible, with a person who needed real help. There were two individuals who were healed of scleroderma disease. There is no cure for it. One person on record in Africa got over it, but most people die from it. Both of these women were healed. One was in North Carolina and one was here. Both of them are healed and well today. I had a bout. I was dealing with one of them telling her that the doctor said that he doesn't know what it is and doesn't know how to cure it. It's incurable. I said, "It's just wise to quit trying this and that. Lay it all aside and get healed." The daughter-in-law, because she loved her, broke in, "Don't pay any attention to him. We are going to get you another doctor. We're not going to just let you lay here like this." Now, I know she did it because she loved her but it was human thinking. There wasn't a thing she said that was according to the Bible. Temptation and hard places are where the devil will introduce human thinking. "I'll tell you what is best for you to do." Well, I'm going to tell you what is best to do. Do what God said.

What did I tell the congregation? Oh, they have been wonderful to me. I could make more money retired than I do working, I guess. They gave me a glider last year to sit in the backyard and glide. You know what I told them when they gave it to me? "I'm not ready to glide. I'm still flying." I'm part of the flying ministry, the angel flying in the midst having the everlasting Gospel to preach to them that dwell on the earth.

Human thinking. Our progress is hindered and retarded as the church of God by human thinking because we are suffering too much the things that be of man and not of enough the things that be of God. I'm not speaking of my good wife in a wrong way. She loves me. She said, "I can't have a good time with you when you're lying dead in the casket." I know that but I have something that I settled on long ago. I'm going to live until I die. Isn't that wonderful? It's all clear. I'm going to live until I die. If we are going to be followers of Christ, we have to throw out the things of men, no matter how real, appetizing, honest, or clear they are. You men don't labor 32 years in a factory until you get to retire. It's logical to retire but not if God says, "Stay on the job." How many have been misled and had to take a rebuke. "Get behind me, Satan." Christ wasn't talking to the devil. ●

Disciples' Priority ----June 17, 1986

I know that some people believe the things [covered in these messages] are small things but these are the things that are bogging us down. We are not having trouble with the big things. You can visit people who are not getting along well and say, "Well, I'm here to help you, brother. Do you have a problem that you can't handle?" Nine times out of ten they will say, "No, I don't have a big problem. Just a few little things that are really troubling me." Jesus in Matthew 25, when He taught us about the talents and how they were passed out. He knew what He was doing. He won't give us any more than we will be faithful with. That's why too many don't have too much. I'm not being hard. It is in the Book. He passes the talents out according to our several abilities. He knows what we can handle. When the one who He gave five to, got five more, what did He say? "You have been faithful in a few things. I'll make you ruler over many things." These few things, the things that God has given us, if we will be faithful to them we'll enlarge our capacity and efforts for God. The blessing of God will be greater upon us.

In the last message, we studied in Acts 11:26 and found that disciples were first called Christians at Antioch. The word Christian is only used [in the Bible] three times. It is spoken of in a jesting manner. The name of those followers, before they were called Christians, was disciples. Jesus told them that if they continued in His word, then they were His disciples indeed. There were people who were John's disciples and Moses' disciples. We also find today that there are those who are following Catholicism, Protestantism and other groups. We have proved that we are living in a time when people do not know what spirit they are really of, just as Jesus spoke to Peter and John when they wanted to call fire down. Many spirits have gone out and they have children and grandchildren by now. We must try the spirits because these spirits can move in upon us like they did Peter and John. They thought they were in the right spirit, saying the right thing but Jesus said they didn't know what spirit they were of. There can be no division among the people of God until another spirit gets working.

Who is a true disciple of Jesus Christ? He is one who confronts the issues that Jesus raises. He confirms the claims that Christ made. He consents to the plan Christ outlined. We have studied three things by the Bible. "If any man," Jesus said, "will come after Me and be My follower he must deny himself (I preached on true self-denial), take up his cross (In Romans 12 it says to present yourself a living sacrifice which is our reasonable service. That cross is taking up sacrificial service to God. Too many people do not have

that cross. A lot of preaching about the cross where the old man is killed but what about the cross that Jesus said that you must take up and follow Him? That cross bearing service?), and last follow Him.

In the fifth chapter of Philippians, Paul taught the church at Philippi where people were loaded down with pride and selfishness. I wish to God that everyone who got saved were rid of everything and just a perfect Christian. But that isn't so. When you get saved you are just born again. You have lots of things that you need to get rid of and lots of things you need to lay hold of. If that wasn't true, you wouldn't need pastors. When God saves a new convert, He dumps him right in the pastor's hands and says, "Now, go to work on him and make a real disciple out of him." A man can be borned again and become a Christian (I don't like to use the term Christian too much), using the modern sense of the phrase, but he has to be made a disciple. What is the commission? I know the King James says to go teach all nations but the Greek says to go make disciples out of all nations. Disciples are made! If everybody in our congregation was a disciple, we would have twice as many congregations in a year as we have now. There are too many who are just struggling to be a Christian. They are working themselves to death to keep their own head above water. They can't even have a thought of going out and discipling others.

This [topic] doesn't mean a whole lot to many people but it meant a lot to Jesus. He knows what it takes for you and I to be soul winners. Every bit of the messages He sent forth were building [saved people] up to be disciples for one reason: so we can go make other disciples. We need to start evaluating our life according to the word of God. Too many just rest on the stool of do-nothing and rejoice in the fact that they don't smoke, drink, have a TV or do lots of things. Evaluate yourself by the Bible. Are you a soul winner? If you're not, you're not worth anything to God. Whew! Not really because He saved you to save others. When you get this experience working right in your life, it will be impossible to keep from affecting others. Jesus said that when the church is where she needs to be, she is as a city set on a hill that cannot be hidden. People say, "You can't see it." If the church will be the church you can't hide it! Am I trying to make you feel bad? I'm trying to get you to lift your eyes up. God has more for us than we are getting a hold of. I am not at all satisfied. I tell my congregation over and over that I am thankful for things that have been accomplished but I am not at all satisfied because God is not satisfied with us working as we are. There are greater things.

Previously, I spoke how when God poured His Holy Spirit out, they were in one accord. It is still necessary. If we want fresh outpourings of God's Spirit in our midst, we have to reach that one accord position. I'm not talking about agreeing on every point of doctrine. I proved to you by the Bible that they were in one accord and there were a lot of doctrines they didn't understand. They were sold out to God with one thing in mind: being a useful instrument for God. They wanted the Gospel to go forth to a lost and dying world. They knew it was the only hope of the world being detoured from Hell.

In Matthew 5:1-2, we are breaking into the Sermon on the mount where Jesus gave some definite teachings to His disciples. I know people look at this as unnecessary but I can't say anything is unnecessary when it is in red letters in my Bible. People say, "You shouldn't have missed that. It's right there in black and white." What I'm preaching on is in red and white. *And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain: and when he was set, his disciples came unto him.* Now, this was a message and teaching to His disciples. We are dealing with thoughts of who His disciples are. He started out telling who was blessed and who wasn't blessed. He came down and showed that the New Testament standard was bringing the moral right back to God's original law. God had granted some things because of the hardness of heart but now Jesus was bringing it back to the standard of God's moral law from the very beginning. In the sixth chapter, He warned us about doing our righteousness before men and only doing what we do so that men will see us. Certainly, we want to be seen by men but we can't do it so that men will see us. He let us know that He was looking at the motive of the heart.

Matthew 6:24 **24** *No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon. 25* *Therefore (because you can't serve God and mammon) I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? 26 Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? 27 Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature? 28 And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: 29 And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. 30 Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? He didn't think His disciples had too much faith. He had His disciples apart on a mountain. He wasn't talking about some mass multitude that didn't have faith. 31 Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat?*

or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? 33 But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Jesus, all through this Sermon on the Mount, taught His disciples that they were to be a unique people, living a completely different life than the people around them. He gave them the basis for it. He showed that they have different priorities than the rest of the world. We are not seeking after what the rest of the world is seeking after.

Priorities, Anxieties and Obsessions

Jesus made it very plain, that being His disciples has much to do with the way we live our lives. In this sermon, Jesus pointed out the priorities that most people have. If I had you write down your priorities some would say that they do not have any. Then list the things you are most anxious about. Those are your priorities. You may profess something else but that is your priority. [It is] keeping people from seeing the Kingdom and the church. If we are anxious about something above all else, that is what is important to us. You will notice that He spoke about things that the Gentiles, or most people were anxious about. Food. What shall we eat? Fashion. What shall we wear? Oh, what a stress the saints are under to stay up with the fashions. Clothes closets are full of clothes that haven't begun to be worn out. They are in good shape. But the fashions change. Oh, what a sweat we are under! The devil is really working. Do you ever watch him? I teach my people (I don't think they all abide by it) he is ever changing to get everything we have. He goes from wide neck ties to narrow ones. Just hold on the wide ones, brothers, because they are coming back around. They are already coming out. He goes from wide lapels on the coat to narrow lapels. He goes from short dresses to long dresses. I teach our sisters, "Just leave them modest and you'll catch it going both ways." Thank God, you'll always be in style. When they are going up, they have to go by where you dress. When they come down they go by where you dress. It's not just in the dress. He is doing it from every angle. I remember back when we drove the old cars with the gear shift and the clutch. We were glad to get it up on the steering wheel. What a blessing when the automatic transmission came. It cost \$800 more but what a blessing. Now, you pay \$800 to get the shift back on the floor! It is like a snare. God expects the world to be caught in it. He expects you and I to be a little wiser. In too many cases, we can't promote the missionary program that we need to encircle the globe with the Truth. Why? We spent too much of our finances, caught in this snare of trying to keep up. We can truthfully say when it's time to spread the Gospel, "We don't have anything left." God is not only taking

your answer that you don't have anything left but He wants to know what you spent it for. His own words are that these are the things that the Pagans (Gentiles) and unbelieving world seek after. What were they? Food. What will we eat? Fashions. What will we wear? Fitness. How can we extend our lives? "I don't have time to pray but I can run five miles every morning so I can live a little longer. I'm trying to save my life." You can't extend your stature one bit! I believe we need to eat what is right. I believe we need to exercise and lose weight. But the devil is getting us all anxious about a lot of things. It comes right down to family. You can read in the scripture in Luke 12:13, there was a big stir. One came to Jesus saying, "Make my brother divide my inheritance with me." That was what he was anxious about: inheritance and money. Christ went on in verse 19 and said, "Don't lay up for yourself. Don't lay up for yourself. Don't lay up for yourself. Don't lay up for yourself." Who is that bank account for? If you were laying it up for me, I didn't know it but I'm thankful. You're not laying it up for me. I'm not preaching against laying up for a rainy day but we are not going to have a thousand year rain. I'm preaching against a spirit that causes an anxiousness to get a hold of you until your mind and heart get set on that in such a way that you can't extend the Kingdom.

The things they were anxious about are the same today and work in the same way. He pointed out their activities. They were running here and there buying, selling, planting, and building. These are the activities we get caught in in this snare. We can identify our priorities when we identify our activities. Face it. We always find time to do what we really want to do. This is what gets us in trouble. He talked about ambitions and the things we are concerned and eager for. Look at verse 32: *For after all these things do the Gentiles seek.* The Greek word for *seek* is very close to being translated as *obsessed*. You become obsessed with these things and you are bound with them. You can hear a message that comes right down and shows them their condition. You'll say, "I see it! I'm going to go home and do differently." You can't do differently. If you could, you would have been doing it but this thing has worked on you until you need help from God. These things will obsess you. That is why God in II Chronicles 7:14 says, *If My people, who are called by My name, will humble themselves and pray.* Not just pray, but HUMBLE themselves. When they pray, [they should] seek God's face. Why God's face? Because you can't change your mind and do better. If you could have changed your mind and done better you would have got saved by changing your mind and doing better. We need to seek God's face! We need the power of God to get loose from these things that have taken a hold of us! They come slightly and deceitfully. We never walk openly into them. We never think that they are

going to get such a hold on us but we find that they do. We must turn to God; He is the only One.

The Heart

In verse 32 of the text He said that they were grasping after and ambitious for the same things the Pagans are after. This is one place where we are pulling the blinds down and closing the door and the light is not getting out as it ought to. If you see and own what your ambitions are about, I repeat, you'll discover where your priorities lie. Once you find them, you need to evaluate them because you can get them out of line. Jesus lets us know that the things we call 'all important' are truly less important. There is nothing more important than praying, studying, and attending service. There may be conditions where you can't do those things; God is not a hard task master. He is looking at the heart. When He sees in your heart that you desire to do them but other things come in, that you have no control over, God will work with you. He is faithful and will not quit you. But when He looks in a heart and sees that we COULD but we seek excuses, we are in trouble. Jesus sent them out to say that the supper was prepared. The Kingdom was all prepared. All things were ready. That's enough to prove that the Kingdom was right then. All things are ready; you don't have to wait years from now. They began to make excuses. Why did they begin to make excuses? They didn't have one. As have a God who is looking at the heart. He understands us.

The Plum Line

Disciples need to listen to what Jesus said. If we bring our priorities into line with His priorities, it brings a different beat in our life and we move in a different way. This is one place where our uniqueness and winsomeness lie. We need a criteria to build by. If you're going to build a house, you don't line it up with some tree. You don't get back and eye it saying, "That's pretty good. Nail it right there." We have too many today who are going by the way that they see it. "Well, the way I see it, this is all you have to do." Just as when we build a material house, we need a plum line, a square, and a level. God gave the prophet a plum line. He said he wasn't going to go by Israel anymore. They were building crooked and sideways. He said, "Just drop the plum line." God still drops the plum line out of Heaven. If your life doesn't line up with it, you're crooked. I don't care who you are, you're crooked. We have critics who come along and say that they will push the Word over a little because it crowds them. You can push it over but as soon as you take your hand off

it is going to come right back to where it was. Movement after movement has tried to push it over a little. "This isn't necessary!" But as soon as God was able to get someone to take their hand off, it came right back to where it was. The Truth will always do that.

What is the plum line? He gave it to us in this lesson in verse 33. Seek first the Kingdom of God! Then all of these other things will be added unto you. Not if you don't work for them. Not if you don't ask for them. Too many just rest on the 'added' business. "Oh, if I just work for God and go sit down, He will supply all of my needs." No, that verse rests in the light of other verses. He said that you don't have it because you don't ask. He said, "Ask!" He knows what you need before you ask. It is yours. But you get it by asking and working for God. Too many are resting on the scripture about the birds. They don't sow, reap or have barns. But that is for the birds. He told you and I to sow, reap and have barns. The guideline is to seek first the Kingdom of God.

Entering and Experiencing the Kingdom

If the Kingdom is first, then entering and experiencing that Kingdom in our life is the top priority. Jesus stopped Nicodemus flat. (I don't find so much fault with Nicodemus as some do. They say he came by night. First of all, he was a busy man; second, rabbis did their studying at night. So he came right at the right time, at night.) He said, "Jesus we know that you are a man from God. No man can do such miracles as you do. You are bound to be a teacher from God." Jesus said, "Stop right there. Nick, except when a man is born again, he can't enter into the Kingdom of God." He said, "How?" He didn't understand. I met a man the other day who I had prayed for in the hospital. I talk to him now and then. He is kind of a bully. He likes to get on me and especially belittle me in front of people. I went to the junkyard this week to get a piece of iron and he was there. There were several men in the office. I didn't pay any attention to him but he hollered, "Is campmeeting going on?" I said, "Yes." He said, "Can I bring my beer and come out?" I said, "Come on out. Leave the beer at home." He said, "I can't understand you people." I said, "You're standing right where Nicodemus was. You never will understand until you are born again." That crowd really laughed him down. Jesus said it both ways when He said that if you can't see the Kingdom, you can't enter into the Kingdom. Without entering into the Kingdom, you can't see it. It isn't something you can stand off and look at. You've got to enter into it to see it (or the Greek said 'to understand it). It takes an experience. The brother told you the other night that when God came over into the New Testament we wouldn't say to a brother or neighbor to teach us, because

everyone would know themselves individually through an experience with God. If the Kingdom is top priority, entering in and getting an experience of it is the first thing necessary.

I know the Kingdom of God is one of the most confused doctrines that we have today. Because of it, we have millennium teachings of every kind. If you remember back in the beginning of this world, God's people had no king but God for years. Earthly conditions so rubbed off on them that they desired an earthly king. They wanted a man here on earth to be their king. They made many moves to make men their king. I'll mention one in Judges. After God called Gideon and used him in such a marvelous way to whip the Midianites, you'll read that they wanted him to be their king. They moved God until He gave them Saul, proving that if you hold out long enough, God will give you what you want, even if it's wrong. God gave them good kings and bad kings. Israel suffered much from those human kings that they wanted. Finally in Ezekiel 21:27, God said, "I will overturn and overturn and overturn until He comes whose right it is to be King." He was speaking of Christ's coming. For over 400 years (twice as long as the United States is old) man never heard from God. No prophet spoke. When that time ended, out of the wilderness came a man in a leather girdle, eating honey and wild locust. He started hollering, "Repent! For the Kingdom of God is at hand! God is going to take over again! God is going to be King just like He was King before! Repent! For the Kingdom of God is at hand!" This is still exactly what the Kingdom is. God would be King of your life.

Why is the Kingdom of God [referred to] as the Kingdom of Heaven? Jesus lived on this earth just like it is in Heaven. He taught us in the Sermon on the Mount for us to pray for His Kingdom to come and His will to be done in earth (in us) just like it is done in Heaven. The second chapter of Ephesians talks about Christ being lifted up, exalted and made Head over everything to the church and about our great salvation. He kept right on going and said that YOU hath He quickened and YOU hath He raised up. We are raised up together with Christ to sit in Heavenly places. What are those Heavenly places? Where the will of God is done in us just like it is done in Heaven. This is the Kingdom we must seek. Until God's will is done in your life, just like it is done in Heaven, you need to seek.

True disciples understand the Kingdom is first. Entering and experiencing that Kingdom is top priority. The first of the first is to experience the Kingdom. Jesus said to Nicodemus, "You must be born from above." It's called the Kingdom of Heaven. The power of God from Heaven comes into your life and changes you. There is a mighty work

of transformation where He takes the old heart out and puts a new one in; He takes the old spirit out and puts a new right Spirit (His Spirit) in you. You are born from above. The only place your name is written down is in Heaven. Our citizenship is in Heaven. I tell the church all the time, "I don't belong to this world. I am a stranger here. I belong to Heaven. My name is on the record." I was a first sergeant in the Army and it was a terrible time during the first three days. I would get a new batch of maybe four or five hundred men. At four or five o'clock in the morning, I would have to get out there with a flashlight trying to read names that were [so long, especially the names from New York]. I couldn't get them together well enough to pronounce them. I told the captain that one day I sneezed and three of them fell out of line. That's roll call. Well, my name is on the roll [in Heaven]. They read it this morning. When they read *Emerson Wilson*, somebody said, "He hasn't come yet. He'll be coming any day." We don't belong here; we belong to the Kingdom of Heaven.

We are not here to try to change the world. The world cannot be changed. We are trying to get men and women out of this world so that they can be changed. God never sent us once to change the government or the world. He sent us to get people out of the world as much as we are out of the world and live for God.

Jesus said we must be born from above. See, 'born again' doesn't work anymore. Ever since Jimmy Carter was President, everyone is born again. Drunkards, alcoholics, first class crooks; they are all born again. He set the standard for 'born again'. So I preach being born from above. Being born from above is having God's power from above and having the King of Kings move into your life, sit on the throne of your life and reign over your life. The Kingdom is where the King functions in His correct capacity. It means that the King begins to be King of your life. Someone from above has moved in and you begin to discover a whole new realm of experience. I once heard a story, maybe you have heard it before, of a man who wasn't all there. I can't say he was a simple man because he got saved. He went into the Salvation Army and got saved. He was so happy. His wife, who wasn't a Christian not much mentally above him, was happy because he was happy. One Sunday he came home from church and was downhearted and sad. His wife said, "What's wrong, Sam? You're not happy anymore." "No, I'm not happy." "How come?" "Well, everybody down there wears a red sweater and I don't have one." So she knitted him a red sweater and he went away happy. "Oh, I'm so happy, wife, to go to church. I have a red sweater just like they have." He came home that day sad. She said, "What's the matter now, Sam?" "Well they all have red sweaters but they have yellow letters on theirs." She

said, "Alright, I'll try to put yellow letters on your sweater." She couldn't think what to write on it but she looked across the street where there was an old business going out of business and a new business coming in. They had a sign up so she copied the letters from the sign onto the red sweater. He went to church and came home so happy. She said, "Did they like your sweater?" He said, "Oh, did they like my sweater!" "Did they like your letters?" "They liked my letters better than their letters." You know what she had put on it? UNDER NEW MANAGEMENT. He had found the King. He was born from above.

Expressing the Kingdom

The King establishes a reign on the throne of our heart and life. When this happens you start marching to a different drum beat. You will be out of step with this world. You might be like the little boy who was marching in the Boy's Scouts parade. They didn't know it but he had headphones in his ear and a radio in his pocket. The brass band was playing but he was out of step. The reason he was in step with the music that was in his ear. When you sell out to God and let Him make you new and let old things pass away, you will be marching to a whole new drum beat. You'll be out of step with this old world.

You don't have to be out of step with this world very long until they begin to ask, "Why do you do things differently? Why are you different?" One of my sisters-in-law was so embarrassed a few months back. We went into a restaurant in Florida and she had her hair all bobbed and short like they are wearing it. She and my wife went into the restroom and as soon as they went in, a woman turned around and said, "I can see that you're and Christian and that you're not." That world out there isn't as dumb as you think they are. There is a way you can tell. Did you ever pull up beside someone at a stop light and see the one in the car [dancing] to a different drum beat? They are not tuned into the same station that you are. We are in a day in time when false love is trying to work. We are in a time of smoothing things over and not pressing judgment. If you press judgment, someone might get hurt. Because of this many people require no major changes in their life, just as long as they feel better. They just 'paper over the cracks'. Now, there are things that you can do religiously that will make you feel better. I never ask people who I am praying with if they feel better. No, because almost anything religious will make you feel better. Feeling better never gets you to that place of radical transformation. It is only when you come clean and the King comes in. He still doesn't move into a dirty temple. We only come to grips with regeneration when I realize the meaning of I Corinthians 6 that says that you are not your own. You have been bought with a price. Therefore, since

you are not your own and you belong to somebody else, glorify God in your body (first). “Oh, the body doesn’t count anymore.” He put the body first. Glorify God in your body and spirit. When we realize that we belong to God in body and spirit, every artery running out from our body and spirit belongs to God. I don’t have anything. Strict Bible teaching tells us that it all belongs to God. He, in His love and mercy, made us stewards over it but it is actually God’s.

He went a little farther. He said to seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness. Not only experience the Kingdom but express it by living godly and righteously in this present world. If we experience the Kingdom then we must, by living right, express it by showing it forth and helping others to see it. The top priority becomes expressing the Kingdom after you have experienced it. We need to stay committed to what is good, right, and true. It is very easy to fall to the level of this world and become committed to what is popular, profitable, and comfortable. These stand in opposition to what is good, right and true. If you allow both [priorities] to work in your life, it will not be long until they lock horns. “It’s more profitable and comfortable to go this way.” But it is not right.

Good, Right, and True

We need to be careful that we don’t preach so strongly on what is wrong with something that we don’t bounce it off with what is right. When abortion, homosexuality, and other things came up, it was our duty [this is the church’s mission] to cry out against them and let people know that these things are wrong. But we need to take the other side quickly. Suppose that in our audience, that Sunday morning when we really hit abortion hard, there is a young girl who is in the family way. She is afraid to tell her parents and she doesn’t know what to do. You know what we need to add when we hit abortion hard? We need to add that we would be glad to open our home, take you in and bear the expenses. You know what happens? They shout and [roar] when you hit it hard but ask, “Raise your hand. Who will take a young lady in and help her?” It would upset our comfort.

I have kept alcoholics and would keep them yet today. I had one rob us poor one night while we were at church. That hasn’t changed my mind. I know I’ve hit a sour note but it is true. It is one thing for us to tell the world how wrong and how dark something is; it’s another to stretch out a helping hand and say, “We will help you with that.” This

isn't being done. We lay judgment on them and let them go work out a [solution] the best they can. I'm preaching on priorities and seeking first the Kingdom. [I'm preaching] on living by that which is good, right and true. God help us.

I think of another person who found Christ and the Kingdom. He had the reality within his heart. He threw the liquor down the drain; nobody said anything to him. It wasn't very many days until he came and said, "Pastor, I've got to quit the work that I am working at. I can't be a Christian and work where I am. And I'm making big wages." This thing of seeking first the Kingdom of God gets into our daily lives in a greater way than we realize. We have to keep before us what is good, true and right. We must not let the spirit of the age throw into our minds what is popular, profitable, and comfortable.

When I say popular today, I mean how people say, "Everybody is doing it." Well, everybody isn't doing it. Who isn't? Christ's disciples. I bought a car one time. I didn't pay any attention to how they filled the papers out. When I went back the next morning to give the money, the man said, "I want you to sign this paper." I said, "Well, as soon as I look at it." I saw that it said that when I signed it, I was swearing that the above statements were true. He had done what automobile places do. They brought the cost of theirs down and the price that they gave me a lot higher. I said, "I'm not signing that." He said, "Why? Everybody does this." I said, "Everybody doesn't. Here is one that doesn't. Don't say everybody does." "Well, this is foolish!" I said, "No, it isn't. If it would keep me out of Heaven, would it be foolish?" "Well no, if that is how you look at it." "That is how I look at it." He has respect for me today. Keep in mind what is good, right and true. The devil is working to get you to look at that little thing that doesn't amount to anything. If it kills your influence and outreach for God, it amounts to something. That is what the devil wants.

There is a way you can tell the true disciples now. That which is true is not popular and it never will be. The spirit of the beast has gone out and affected our world. Roman Catholics will teach their people that it is alright to lie in some cases. There is a brother who stole when he was an altar boy. When he got saved, he went back to make it right. The priest said, "You're foolish. If you take a dollar, there is nothing wrong with it. If you take a hundred dollars [there is]." He told him that those church of God people had really brainwashed him. No, he got his heart washed white. When you get your heart washed white, you want your garments to be clean. Read it over there. They washed their garments and made them clean in the blood of the Lamb! You will want your life to be

clean. It is these little things that the devil makes us feel do not amount to anything. That is keeping us from being true disciples to Jesus Christ.

I read about a man who worked in a bank. The president of the bank, who had hired him, walked by his desk and said, "If so-and-so calls, I'm out." The young man said, "Are you going to be out?" The president said, "No." The young man said that he couldn't tell them that he was out if he was in. The president's face got red and he was ready to fire the young man. He said, "Now, mister, if I don't lie *for* you, I'll never lie *to* you. But if I lie *for* you, I'll probably lie *to* you." The bank said, "I like that," and gave him a raise and better job. Keep in mind what is right, good and true.

We need to seek the Kingdom first and the experience of it. Then we need to express it by living according to God's righteousness. It is His righteousness. It is true that there is no one but God Who is good but when He gets inside you, you start becoming right. If you are experiencing the Kingdom, then you can definitely express it. If you truly experience it, it will be expressed. The King is the One who beats the drum of our lives and we march to that drum. This produces a different people that ones look up to and take notice of. Every honest heart will take notice. This is when the disciples come to the front and others want to be like them.

Extending the Kingdom

Seeking first the Kingdom means that you take seriously what the Lord has said. Jesus said that this Gospel of the Kingdom must first be preached to all nations and then the end will come. This means that those who have the Kingdom as a priority, it is an experience, expression and also causes us to extend it. The Kingdom is not being extended as it ought to be. I put myself right in there. We are doing our best to make progress and thank God for the young men who are feeling the call to the ministry. We want a work here and a work there. [Still] the Kingdom is not being extended. Extending the Kingdom rests on experiencing and expressing it. If you'll do those two, there will be an extension. When people get so comfortable in experiencing the Kingdom that they have no burden or concern for the extension of the Kingdom, there is something that has happened to us. Another spirit has got in.

We need to get our priorities reevaluated. What has been the move? To try to make ourselves more comfortable. We have better buildings than we have ever had but that isn't the answer. When we built this building, we didn't try to make it fancy. We tried to build

it as plain as we could and get as many as we could under one roof. Why? This is just a place where God's people can be taught and schooled and then go out there and do the work. A wrong attitude will get a hold of us, if we are not careful, after being schooled and taught. We will come right around and do our work in our own spot. We are missing some things. The big move of most today (I hate to say most but I think that is the case) is that we are trying to get people to church instead of trying to get them to Christ. The morning church went out and won them to Christ and then brought them to church. We want a very nice, comfortable, and respectable place (and I'm not against having a nice place to worship God) but I'm saying that our priorities can get mixed up. We say we want a really nice place to bring people in, but the church can't save them. The church of God can't save them. If we are the true church, the only thing we can do when we meet people is introduce them to our husband. Say, "Don't try to join us." No man tried to join the morning church. Why? Because they wouldn't let them. The morning church would have said, "Hey! You need to be joined to God, not to us." We are just the bride of Christ, Christ's wife, left down here to live and allow the priorities of our life to be such that we are pointing people to Jesus, Jesus, Jesus.

Seek First!

Oh, the fears that people are caught up with. With the fears, faith can't work. Fear can't work where faith is. People are so fearful. Our nation is running on paper. We have lost our real values. We are bankrupt as a nation. People are afraid that their social security isn't going to hold out. They are afraid about MediCare. They are afraid they are going to do this. Jesus said to take no thought. There is too much thinking and meditating on what is going to happen to us physically. I don't care what is going happen to you if you are going to be the church. You are going to make it with victory. God knows that you need these things. Nowhere does he tell us to seek those things in the thought of seeking as the word is used but seek first the Kingdom. If you are bound with habits of life, seek first the Kingdom. Thank God for any moves that are being made with Alcoholics Anonymous but it is still leaving people bound. I listened to a radio talk show that had an Alcoholics Anonymous man (I'm not running it down, but I want you to see where the true secret of victory is) on there that had different ones speak about how they had been helped and laid drinking aside. The head of the program said that he wanted to make it clear that there is no cure for alcoholism and all they can do is help. I shook my head and said, "God, we should be on 10 radio stations after him telling them that there is a cure for alcoholism." There is a cure for sin of every kind! Did you ever read in the

scripture that he went about doing cures? He doesn't give treatments; He does cures! Turn your life over to Him, tell Him that you are whipped and that the prince of this world has taken you captive. Ask Him to loose you and to come into your life. Ask Him to be King over your life. The power of sin and satan will be broken from that moment forward. Seek first!

There are too many who are trying to fix themselves. I worked with a man the other day who said, "Reverend, I am going to come out to church. I have some things I need to straighten out in my life. I know what you preach out there and when I get them straightened out, I'm coming out." What did I tell him? Seek first! You can go make restitution and try to get your life straightened out a little before you come to Jesus but nine times out of ten you'll have to do it again. Why? When you went, you went to your own glory. God wants it done to the glory of God. He wants you to be able to say, "God saved me. God cleaned me up. I'm here making this right because God has led me to do this."

Seek first the Kingdom of God and all His righteousness and all these other things will be added unto you. God help us to understand. I know this is primary. I told you before that we are dealing with the ABCs of the Kingdom. God help us to get shaken a little, and get our eyes off of experiencing and enjoying the Kingdom [so much] and let's do a little expanding. It doesn't matter who you are; you can't have everlasting joy without working for God. There is a joy that comes from service. You can't have joy if you don't work. You know what that joy is when you lead someone to Christ. You say that you feel like you are getting saved again. That joy of salvation comes into your heart and splashes all over you and blesses you.

What are your priorities? What are you really anxious about? Are you anxious about what makes you comfortable? Are you anxious about what will give you a good livelihood? Or are you truly interested in experiencing, expressing and extending the Kingdom of God. We need to take another look. There is something wrong with us as a congregation if we can't raise another one up. The wise man said that the fruit of the tree of life is another tree. I've told it before but I didn't really understand that scripture. I was out in Montana holding a meeting for a brother who was a lumber man. He sawed those big trees down that were mighty tall. He took me up where he was working in an area. I could see [that trees had been cut down] but every twenty-five feet or so, I could see where there was a tree standing. He said, "We've cleared this area out." I said, "I don't think you

have, brother. There are some standing.” He said, “Oh, we leave them for seed. If we leave that tree standing there, there will be a dozen other trees that will come up.” The fruit of the righteous is another tree of life. The fruit of another spiritual congregation is raising another one up.

They are still in an awful distress in Haiti because what came in was Communism when the other [government] went out. It is really working havoc. Some of them were dispersed out of Haiti, which is the lower half of the island. The Dominican Republic is the other half. It is more progressive and financially fixed. It is hard to infiltrate the border of the two countries. Some of the saints were able to get across. They have been able to raise up eight congregations already. Shame on us. You may say, “Well, they are poor.” Is God going to have to make us poor before we get to business for Him? There were eight new congregations just raised up in the Philippines. They are worshiping outside. There is [a group of people] there who are asking for a roof. They are not wanting to make the thing big because some of them reach out and start another one.

I’m not making you feel bad; I’m preaching the sermon on the mount. We are too anxious about some things. We need to get our priorities straight. Jesus tells us simply. First, the Kingdom; experience it, express it, and extend it. Our priorities move us about. People are living in places where the Kingdom cannot be promoted. It isn’t being preached. They [attend services] where less than the standard [is being preached]. Why? Their children are there. Others take out and move where they have to drive many miles to church. Why? They didn’t seek the Kingdom first. All they wanted was a comfortable climate and a nice home. After everything else, they start looking for a place where they can attend church. One brother who is an electrical engineer was offered much more money to go up north in New York for a position. He said that he would go up and look. He took his wife and they spent several days looking for a church of God [congregation] where the truth was preached. He couldn’t find it. He said, “I’m not going to move.” They asked, “Is it not enough money?” He said that the money wasn’t the question. He told them that there wasn’t a church there where he could get his children in. They thought he was crazy. Seek first. Seek first in experiencing. Seek first in expressing it. Our lives need to be so lived that we express the Kingdom of God. We need to let the world know that we are not our own; we are bought with a price.

All Aspects of Life

If someone says, “I have a real bargain here. Do you want to buy it?” You should say, “I don’t know. Wait until I ask.” “Where is your wife? In the car?” “I don’t mean to ask my wife.” I remember a brother preaching along that line. He lived in Philadelphia and needed a new refrigerator. He went down the street that was lined with used furniture stores. He went into some of the stores and would say, “Hmm. I’ll let you know.” He went to about five and finally God said, “That’s the box.” He got a really good one for cheap. He went back down to every store and opened the refrigerators and said, “Praise God!” The dealers just stood and looked at him. They didn’t know why he was praising God but he knew. Start living like you are not your own. You’ll begin to express God. Jesus made it very plain that when we are experiencing, expressing and extending the Kingdom, other things will fall into place.

If you are doing these three things, it will affect your eating. It will affect where you eat, how you eat, and how much you eat. A smorgasbord was never heard of until this day of eating. People who are supposed to be saints, because it is free, eat more than they can hold after the first plate. It is getting to the place where when people are calling in the middle of the night asking if I can come over because they are terribly sick, one of the first things I ask them is what did they eat before you went to bed.

This will affect your relationship with your family. Too many children do not know that their parents are seeking the Kingdom first. If you seek the Kingdom first, they will start recognizing it and say, “Dad really means it. He’s got it right.” It will affect where you go, what you do and the clothes that you wear. The priority of the Kingdom will do that. You will find that true disciples walk at a different step and have different priorities than this old world has. This is part of the plain teachings that Jesus laid out, telling us how we can be blessed in our efforts and effective in winning the world. If I were going to preach all of the messages that are on my heart in this series, I would end up with His last commission, *go make disciples just like you.*

These last thoughts were brought out during the altar call for this message:

I’m not going to take back what I said in the message. In fact, I am going to repeat it. You are out of the will of God if you are out in some desolate place where you can’t sit under the sound teaching of God’s word, be blessed by it and able to work by it. You need to start praying for one of two things: God move me where there is a working body of Christ or

else help me start one where I am. God does not want us to sit in isolation. I will never believe that God wants us to rest in these positions. If you can't work where you are, get out of it. The message that comes *out of it* is for you. I repeat, either get to a place where there is a working body and you can become part of the working force or else you need to pray for God to help you raise one up right there. His will will be one way or the other. There is no in between. There are people who say, "Have mercy on me, Brother Wilson, I'm isolated." God doesn't want you to be isolated. I tell you that because I love you. One of these days very quickly, God is going to bring everything to a halt. The night is coming where we can't work. I thought about how the brother told me that Communism has moved so quickly in Haiti. I laid last night on my bed wondering how we could accelerate our work in Haiti. We are going to have to do while we can because the night of Communism has taken over half of our world now. It will bring a condition where we can't work freely, like we do now. That's not just Haiti. It is more true about us than we realize. Now is the time. Now is the accepted time. Today is the day of salvation. Now is the time of opportunity. Now is the time when God is ready. God, help us to be ready. I ask again, are you experiencing the Kingdom, expressing it and extending it? I know with that extension that God isn't expecting all of you to leave your jobs and go overseas. I know for every one person to go to the mission field it takes many, maybe one hundred workers to support that work. I realize this. But I say that we need to ask ourselves if we are laboring for the extension of the Kingdom or if we have become too comfortable in what we have. It is a known fact that when any movement becomes too comfortable in what they have, they have lost what they had. God gives it to somebody else. ●

True Discipleship (Love) -----June 18, 1986

We have been discussing discipleship because there is so much confusion. We studied the Scripture and found that there were many different disciples in Jesus' day: John's disciples, Moses' disciples, etc. Then we came over into our day and found that we have people who are following the beast, Roman Catholicism, who are deceived and think they are following Christ. There are others following the many Protestant eras. In an even smaller place, there are people who are following men who are leading them away. They are the pastor's disciples. God deems it necessary that we look into and study true discipleship.

We began in Acts 11:26 that said that the disciples were first called Christians at Antioch. We showed you that the word *Christian* is only used three times in the Bible, and maybe misused. The word *disciples* was used by Jesus. He called His followers *disciples*. I'm not being technical on that point but we want to learn something about true discipleship.

A lot of the Bible is for our learning and admonition. I know a lot of people do not believe that you can profit from the mistakes of others. There is a lot of this in the Bible. It is written to show you where people got off track and made mistakes. I profit from their mistakes. One reason I profit is because I'm not going to live long enough to make them all myself. I remember one time a man came to a minister and asked, "Do you believe a man ought to benefit from the mistakes of others?" He said, "Yes." The other man said, "Well, I don't and I want that five dollars back that I gave you for marrying me a year ago."

In this message we want to look in John 13:34-35. Do not shut your mind to this expression of truth about love. We are talking about things that are necessary to be Christ's disciples. I told you before, you stand up and preach. People won't take it. You say, "It's right there in black and white." Well this is in red and white in my Bible because it is the very word of Jesus teaching the necessity for discipleship. He taught it plainly and pointed by saying, "NO MAN can come after me except..." Then he began to lay down different necessities for discipleship.

By This Shall All Men Know

John 13:34-35 **34** *A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. 35* *By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye*

have love one to another. I repeat it is not by this and something else. Man says it by this and speaking in tongues, by this and being baptized, and by this and that shall all men know but Jesus nailed it down by saying, "By this." There is not a scripture in the Bible that says people will know that you are Christ's disciple if you speak in tongues. This is another way of leading disciples after themselves. We studied that Christ only makes us disciples to go and make other disciples. That is the real basic reason. I told you before that we need to start measuring ourselves by this standard. Are we winsome? Are we reaching people for God? If we are going to go make disciples we have to find the real key to it. I am fearful that too many haven't found the real key and if they have, they have lost it. What is the real key? Face some facts. We are not going to accomplish much being disciples unless we can establish a critical creditable position ourselves. We have to establish a creditable position among those we are trying to reach. We need to ask ourselves, "What is going to cause people, who are so unconcerned, to be concerned? What is going to be the thing that will move them?" The compelling thing, the thing that will demand their attention, according to Jesus that will cause all men to know, will give knowledge out where there will be no confusion. All men, anywhere, will know beyond confusion that you are Christ's disciple. It is having love one to another.

You know as much as I do, that there is much talking and singing about love. But it seems like we have a hard time getting around to doing it. First of all, we need a definition for what this love is. Everything that people call love isn't love. I believe we help to confuse people by our own vocabulary and talking. We love everything from a cherry pie to a vacation area. "I just loved it! I just loved it!" I would like to see you love a vacation area. I would like to be there when you do it. We get after the world for misusing the word *love*. We say it isn't love but we need to be careful ourselves. One motto said that love is a warm puppy. I don't think it is because sometimes a warm puppy is a damp puppy and it isn't so lovely. People are saying love is almost anything imaginable. I heard one man say that love is like measles. Everybody gets a dose of it sooner or later. Shakespear said that love is a sickness that is full of woes. (That was Shakespear; that is not the Bible.) I'm just trying to give you a picture of what people say that love is. It is used in so many ways that people have lost the true meaning of what this love is that Jesus is talking about. I will press it a little farther. A man may say that he loves his wife. You visit with him a little bit and the dog comes along, jumps on his lap, licks his cheek. He pets it and says, "I love my dog." You're in confusion right there. "Oh, Brother Wilson, you know he doesn't mean that he loves his wife like he loves his dog." I know that! When the

rain comes, he sends his wife out to bring the dog in. I want you to get the picture. Let's get all confused because that is what we are.

People who are honest and sincere are trying to love one another but many times they do not even know what Jesus was talking about. What does it mean to love one another as Jesus said? Let's take it apart. The Greek, that this New Testament was translated from, is much more expressive than our English language. It has many more words for feeling than the English language. Take the Greek word *eros*. It is translated as sexual love. It is a love that goes forth in the bonds of marriage. You say, "You shouldn't talk about that, Preacher." Well, I do. I believe in it. God invented it. The devil didn't invent sexual love. Even preachers get red faced. Let's talk plainly and understand some things. Sexual love was invented by God! It was one of the things that He called good. It is only to be involved under that marriage vow in purity and chastity. The invention of sexual love is an act of God. It is not filthy, corrupt or terrible. How can I say that I believe in sexual love? I have a good reason. If it hadn't been for sex, I wouldn't be here and you wouldn't either. We have good reasons to believe in it. Too many people don't understand love. They just say they love and leave it there. There wouldn't be a church of God if it wasn't for sex. "Oh, that dirty word he is talking about," some may say. It isn't dirty when it is used in the way God ordained it. It is good and blessed. Amen. The danger is, (and I'm not speaking on the home), when love is based only on sexual attraction and satisfaction. It is one of the main reasons the divorce rate is as high as it is. They said 'they loved' but they didn't understand love. It was only sexual attraction and satisfaction. All it takes is a little time until any home built on that will be dissolved.

The second word that is translated from the Greek word love is *phileo*. This is mutualistic love. It escalates very quickly. A young boy looks at a girl. She looks back to see if he was looking back to see if she was looking back at him. It begins to work fast. The first thing you know, they are talking to each other. Then they are holding hands. He tells her that he loves her and she tells him that she loves him. The next thing you know, they get married and live happily ever after for six weeks. Its translated love but it is a mutualistic love. Both people have the same feelings and it escalates fast but that love that escalated so fast, deescalates. You find him one morning looking over the paper saying, "Burnt toast I can stand but thirty mornings out of thirty-one, I can't stand. You may say I am being technical but if I wanted to be technical, what about the eggs? Come on. I have worked with many many broken homes and this is one of the points. The man says, "What was your mother doing all those eighteen years she had you? What in the world was she doing?" The woman replies, "Don't bring mother up". He says, "Well, if she hadn't

failed----". (There is only one man who didn't have any marriage problems and that was Adam. He didn't have a mother-in-law; the Bible says so.) That critical attitude begins to move. I want you to realize it is still mutualistic. It is not escalating; it is deescalating. This is the problem with phileo love. It is great while it is escalating. I've worked with many fractured marriages where homes are broken up. I've never yet met a couple who didn't profess that they loved each other. How can they finish up with such attitudes in such a short time? The reason is that their love was eros or phileo love.

I want to get to the love that John talked about in John 13:35. It is translated from the Greek word agape. It is not a mutualistic love. It isn't a type of love that won't work if the other party isn't loving. There is too much of that now. I want you to understand the Bible truth. This is the deep burden of my heart. This agape love is not a feeling; it is a decision. It is a commitment. It has nothing to do with feeling. When you think of love, you think right away of feeling. You think that if brethren aren't hugging over one another slobbering then there isn't any love. You don't know what agape love is. This love that he talked about is a commitment and decisions. I tell my people that it is not the warm fuzzies. It is a commitment to stand by one another, to be deeply concerned with one another whether you misuse me or not. I keep right on to my commitment. Study the word. It is a commitment, not a feeling. It is a decision to make a commitment to stand by that person. When I get through, you will understand why He said there is only one thing holding the church together: love. What kind of love? Agape, a commitment one to another. "I'll never quit you, brother, no matter what you do to me. I'll never quit you."

This is the love that isn't being felt today. You can be faithful to someone for thirty years and just make one quirk that they don't like. [Just like that] they are done. That is not agape love. We need to understand this if we are going to love one another and win the world. Again, this agape love is a decision to make a commitment to stand by that person. Real, holy matrimony, when two people are married in the sight of God, and God's blessing is on them, it is agape love. They stand there and make a commitment for better or worse, forward or reverse, for time and as long as they live. That is real love. The same thing is true in a real Christian experience. We are marrying people today who are standing right before us and making these commitments who have the thought in the back of their minds, "If this doesn't work, I'll get a divorce and get somebody else." You can't be rightfully married and make a commitment with that thought. There is no real love there. If this love is real, when the other party does wrong (I'll go to the home first) and hurts you, it won't cool the love. It will heat it. You will love them more. Sure it will hurt you but it will only bring a deeper love. Suppose your companion committed

adultery and did wrong. Before your companion did wrong you loved him but if this love is real, after he did wrong, thank God, you'll love him wrong if that love is real. That love will bring the home back together. See divorce is not the way out. Thank God that He gave a right of divorce but that right is an exception. The rule is one man and one woman forever. You may say that I shouldn't get over into the family but Paul taught it that way. Husband, love your wife. What kind of love? Just like Christ loved the church. Go look those words up. It is agape love, agape love, agape love. It is not a feeling, not warm and fuzzies but it is a move across your heart that will cause you to make a commitment. I made a commitment when I got saved and I'm still standing by it. I made a commitment when I got married forty-eight...forty-nine years ago.

Too many little things are upsetting God's people's love for one another. Sure you will hear things that don't make you feel so good. You need to quit receiving them until you look into them and get them to bring some witnesses and know that they are true. Can you see this is beyond any feeling or warmth? This love that He wants us to have for one another, so that the world can see and believe, is a commitment to be true to one another. We will not allow our brother to be run down in our midst. A man tried that the other day with one of my Sunday School teachers. He said, "Does So-and-So still go out there?" I said, "Yes, he teaches Sunday School." "Well, I ran with him. You ought to know the things he has done." I said, "That was before he was saved. He straightened it all out. You show me something he has done since he has been saved." Their mouths need to be stopped. A real commitment to one another will stop it. I'm on the right track. I am preaching on true discipleship. We have too many false disciples around. Again, this agape love that He is talking about is a commitment to stand by that person and to be deeply concerned about their well being however attractive or unattractive, responsive or unresponsive, welcomed or unwelcomed our love is. We still keep it true.

As far as agape love is concerned, their reaction is irrelevant. Jesus said, "*If ye have love one to another...*" Nowhere did he ever say, "Have love another to one." We put it out whether it is returned or not. This is agape love---it loves even if it is not returned. God got no return from us when He so loved us. This love is a love that works when it is not returned. We have brought this love down to a level where John told us not to. We are just loving them that love us. This commandment is a love one to another. Whatever you do about returning it is up to you but I am going to put it forth to you, no matter what you do. It is a commitment! This is the thing that the world is not seeing in too great a way. They are in confusion about who Christ's disciples really are. If you will be true to your

brother today, you will shake people. That man said, “You really love him, don’t you?” I said, “Yes, I do. He is my brother and you’re not going to run him down.”

The Father’s Love

This love is illustrated by the Father for a lost world. This love is not ‘liking a lot’. This love will cause you to love people you don’t like. There are people I don’t like. I don’t like their ways, their talk, or their doings but I love them. You may say that you don’t think you can love something you don’t like but how would you like for me to paraphrase John 3:16. “God so *liked* the world.” The truth of the matter is that He hated the world. He was stirred with the wicked everyday. Even though He didn’t like us, He loved us, thank God, to the place that He sent His son. He is still stirred with the wicked. God doesn’t like what is going on in the world. He doesn’t like for people to raise up and trample His word under foot and to rise up against His ministry but He loves you. (You couldn’t hardly swallow that when I said that I love people that I don’t like, could you? But I do.) You can’t find a place in the Bible where God so *liked* the world. He didn’t like it and He doesn’t like it yet. This love will cause you to love what you don’t like. It is a commitment! God made a commitment way back there. He didn’t like it when Adam sinned. He didn’t enjoy throwing him out of the garden but He made a commitment. He loved our lost world so much that He made a commitment to the woman to bruise the head of the serpent, “I’m going to give My Son to die on Calvary’s cross.” Now we need to understand this because people get likes and dislikes all mixed in with love. Get it straight, you don’t have to like everything everyone does. This audience has done several things since you’ve been here that I don’t like but I love you.

My wife and I were married under agape love. It’s pure and undefiled. God blesses it. That’s why the brother preached the other night that if *you have found a wife, you have obtained favor from the Lord*. God was directing and God was blessing. I know she wouldn’t say that she has liked everything that I have done. How do I know? She has told me. But we love each other. Yes, we do. We need to get this straightened out. The devil has brought much confusion by making people think that they don’t love someone. I have dealt with them at the altar, just crying because they think they don’t love a person because they don’t like what they have done. I’m glad to tell them that they can not like what people do but still love them. It is a commitment to be true to them. From the garden of Eden, God made a decision and was committed to a world living in sin that He disliked very much but loved so much. He was utterly committed to a world that he disliked so much. I repeat, He is angry with the wicked everyday but He loves us.

Now we are together in the family of God. We certainly may have our dislikes but this is no reason for us to disintegrate. A dislike is a challenge to your love. You wouldn't need any love to live together and stay together if everybody pleased each other. If everybody pleased each other we could live together easily. It is love that holds the church together. Why? There will be dislikes, disapproval and things you do not go along with; but if agape love is there you will show love to that brother or sister whether you like what they are doing or not. Many things that are causing disintegration today are just a challenge.

Look at the disciples. John 13:10 says that Jesus loved them to the end but He disliked lots of things that they did. He made it known too. He loved them until the end. Peter was gifted with speech. When the high priest came along, he got stirred. Malchus, the priest's servant, was standing there. Peter took a sword and took a cut at him. The mercy of God guided the sword. He didn't mean to cut his ear off. His aim was Malchus. He was going to separate Mal from Chus and let half of it fall it each way. He guided the sword and just got an ear. Jesus said, "I don't like that, Peter. Put up your sword. Peter, put his ear back on." There it is. Peter was a gifted sleeper. If you don't believe it, run it through the scripture. On the Mount of Transfiguration, he slept and snored. When Jesus was going to get him out of jail, he was asleep. The angel had to wake him up. Just keep reading about Peter. He was a gifted sleeper. I'm not running him down. We can gain from other's mistakes. There were others who had faults. There were things that Jesus didn't like. I teach our people when we get ready to do feet washing, to let their minds go back to the bunch Jesus had to be with to wash feet. There wasn't one in the crowd that was true to Him. All it took was time and what was in them came out. They all fled from Him and left. But, He had this love we are talking about. Get rid of the idea, "I'm not going to wash her feet." You are, if you are a disciple. There wasn't one disciple; the whole congregation of them was in trouble but He got down and washed their feet tenderly. He got up and said, "Just like I have loved you..." How had He loved us? He loved us when we didn't love Him; love when love was not returned. "Just like I have loved you, I want you to love one another. Jesus called James and John the sons of thunder. He could always count on a storm when they were around. Their mother wanted them to be exalted so that one could sit on the right hand and one on the left. I'm not running them down. I'm just telling you how there are things that do not affect this love. It is a commitment; a definite commitment. Too many are not getting down to it today. The biggest hindrance against the Gospel is those who profess to propagate it. The devil is not hurting us. The roadhouses are not hurting us. The depth of sin is not hurting us. How are we getting

hurt? We are hurting ourselves. We hurt our own cause. Our text said to *love one another as I have loved you*. Jesus wasn't explaining love or teaching about it. He was modeling love. If this kind of love is not there, do not expect people to get enthralled with love talk or love singing. Read it again. *A new commandment I give unto to you, that you love...* Jesus said, "You make a commitment to one another just like I made a commitment in Heaven to come down here if you spit in My face, if you beat Me, or run a sword through My side. I agreed to die for you." That is the love and too many have not made that commitment or they have broken it. It doesn't take much to get upset until you are all through.

If we are going to be disciples who are going to make disciples, we have to find the real key. Jesus has told us what it is. We must love one another. How much more powerful the church, as a whole, could become, if we concentrated on demonstrating this one thing that will convince all men everywhere instead of trying to get a hold of different techniques, schemes, plans and ideas to reach people. Some may say, "I made the commitment to God". You need to make it to the church. This is a love one to another. We are not talking about the love that you have for God. This is a love one to another. This is a love for the church. If Jesus so loved the church that He laid down His life for it, we ought to lay down our lives for one another. This puts an end to self love. There can't be self love and have this love. No, love can only be known by the action that it takes. We have proved that it is a commitment. Galatians 5:22 says *the fruit of the Spirit is love*. Romans 5:5 says the very *love of God*, the love that He had for us when He didn't like us, is *shed abroad*. It covers our affection. We don't get a shot of it; it is shed abroad over our whole heart by the Holy Ghost. He is saying that it goes far beyond the strain of natural affection. This love cannot be carried on by natural affections. Your heart has your affections but you must have the love of God shed abroad across all of your natural affections. It should be overshadowing, over-reigning, and overruling all your natural affections. It must be the love of God shed abroad if we manifest this love shed abroad. In 1 Thessalonians 4:9, Paul said that we are taught of God to love one another. Love is an inside work. How are we taught of God? He works it in. Nobody else but God can teach us how to love this love that I am preaching about. We are taught of God. How are we taught? It is an inside work. It is the love of God shed abroad in our hearts. He works it in and then tells us to work it out as He has worked it in. I know these are simple thoughts.

What Love will Produce

This love is not only sincere and unfeigned, but it is outwardly effective. If it is in there, it will not be long until it gets out. It will work outwardly. Paul admonished the

church at Ephesus in 4:18 by writing about *speaking the truth in love*. The word truth there does not mean to preach the Bible in love. That word truth means honesty. Be honest with your brother. I am speaking about things that love will produce. Speak the truth in love. Go down to the twenty fourth verse and he makes it plain that this is what he is talking about. *Put away lying. Speak every man truth to his brother*. When this love that I am talking about is working, we will be truthful and honest with one another. This is so lacking today. People are talking out of both sides of their mouths. They will tell you one thing to your face and another thing when they are with someone else. When you get this love, this commitment, you'll speak the truth in love. There cannot be true love in the home with a companion, where the other is stepping out. Well, let's quit stepping out on each other. Speak the truth and do it in love. There will be a lot of problems that will cease right here. There are too many things being told today that you do not know to be true at all. It is undermining your brother or sister's character and you don't care. You need to go back to Isaiah. You are shedding innocent blood. You have blood on your hands. What do I mean? The person you are running down is innocent of what you are telling. There are more ways to kill a person than to take a gun. There are many ministers whose influence has been so ruined they had to quit. They had nervous breakdowns and quit. They were innocent all the time. You have a picture of that out in the world. All it takes is the media to get after you and run you down. Whether you are guilty or not, you can be just as innocent as you can be, but you will be judged out, put out of influence and lose your business. We need to speak the truth to one another. If you can't speak the truth about me, then keep your mouth shut. We need to face up to some of these things. The devil is causing people to be destroyed. We are eating up one another; Christian cannibals. This love is a commitment. I'm sticking to it and not changing my mind. If half a dozen preachers get up and preach it is fuzzies and all this stuff, I'm here to tell you that this agape love is a commitment to one another. There cannot be true love, in a home, where one is stepping out.

John had so much to say about love. John said in 1 John 3:18, "*My little children...*" See, he called them little children because he was well up in years. History says he was over one hundred. He got so weak in his latter days that he couldn't walk. When they had service, they carried him in. He wasn't able to preach but they always asked him if he had anything to say. He would say, trembling, "*Little children, love one another.*" When they brought him in the next Sunday, he would say, "*Little children, love one another.*" Oh, apostasy was on, a specious apostasy. They asked him after several services why he always said the same thing. He said it is the only thing that will hold us together and really

count. It is the only thing that can stand against divisions and all the works that the devil will bring up among us. There is one thing that will hold us together in completeness before God. Over and over, we read it in the word. My, my, it ought to sink in.

Deed and Truth

He got specific in 1 John 3:18, *My little children, let us love not in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth.* How can you love in word and in tongue? This is being done, I'm sorry to say. You love in word when you come up and say kind things that you mean for the moment but afterward you forget and talk about the brother. I really believe there are people who are moved to say, "Brother, I appreciate you. I really love you." But it is only in words. It doesn't take long until there are other words coming out of the same mouth. Do not love in words. This is a danger. Do not love in words and not take time to fulfill those words. I'll illustrate. If you walk up to me and say, "Brother Wilson, I really love you." If you have that love, on the other side of the world, you will love me just the same. Otherwise, it is just in words. I have had a lot of that and I get sick of it. I have had a lot of people say, "I really love you", when they don't. It is just a word. *Love not in word, neither in tongue.* See, this is to say kind things that you don't really mean. The first example, *in word*, illustrates that you can actually mean what was said for that time and actually have that feeling for that person. When you do this in tongue, it is just an expression of the tongue. It is unreal. It does not go a bit farther than the tongue. Do not love in word or in tongue but in deed and in truth. Your deed is needed to complete that kind word. The truth is needed to correct your insincere tongue. It goes back to speaking the truth in love. This is the rule [that was given by Jesus]: *Love one another as I have loved you.*

Let's add up a few things about agape love. Jesus loved us FIRST before we loved Him. So make sure you are first to love your brother. Do not wait for him to love you. What a love fest we would have today if everybody tried to be first. *Love one another as I love you.* He first loved us. Second, He did not love us for His benefit but for ours. In like manner, our love for the saints must not be self love or for our benefit. It should be to benefit or comfort the brother or sister. I'm talking about agape love. He loved us to make us better. He helped us out of sin to let us share His glory. Our moves should be made to help our brother and make his way better wherever we possibly can. I could go on and on with examples of '*I first loved you*'.

Even To the End

In John 13:1, He loves us constantly, even...to...the...end. This is agape love. By the grace of God, I endeavor to live this way. Agape love is a commitment to one another just like He made a commitment to us. This love will work to the end. I can see it working strongly in some. You can ruffle so-called saints of God. I have been in places where I furred them. They were full of the love of God but they got so ruffled that I only preached three nights before they asked me to go. I didn't preach anything but the truth. In New York I was in the motorhome that I traveled in when the song leader came to mow the yard in shorts, no shirt and a pipe in his mouth. Well, I kept still and preached on spirituality for two nights. The third night, God said, "Let her go." And I let her go...and I went too. It was supposed to be a church of God. It had the name on the front. It was an old congregation that was supposed to have been in the movement for years. When I finished that night, the pianist got off the piano stool and came over to me and said, "Preacher, take your little book and show me where it says it is wrong for me to dance and smoke." I said, "I'm not going to take my little book and show you anything, brother. You get converted and you'll find it out from an inside Source." Too many want you to take the little book and show them something. Did you ever try to show something to a blind man? I love those people. I'm not speaking against them. I am just trying to tell you that not everybody in this world has this love that I am speaking about. It is a commitment.

He loved us constantly, even to the end; in the temptation of the devil, the persecution of the world, and even in the wrath of His Father. Come on, this is strong love. He felt the Father's wrath when He became sin for us. God turned His back on Him and left Him in such darkness that He cried out, "My God, My God, why?" Now, that is terrible darkness. When He came down here in the plan to die on the cross to redeem us (I want you to get the picture) it brought darkness with it when the hour came. If we are not careful, we will get into confusion about why we are actually in this. Why do you cry out when the trial comes your way? "Why did this have to happen to me?" [It is part of] the darkness that is brought with it. Thank God, even the wrath of the Father could not stop this love. He loved us to the end until He poured His last drop of blood and poured His life out. That is what this love will do. It will cause us to have the same love one to another.

Read Romans the eighth chapter. He lets you know that neither height, depth, principalities, powers, things present, things to come, and no other creature can separate us from the love of God that is in Jesus Christ our Lord! This is our overcoming force! This is our power! This is the way that ALL men will be able to see we are Christ disciples.

Ephesians 5: 1-2 says *Be therefore followers of God, as dear children; And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savour.* I don't have time to preach on it but you will read how God spoke through the prophets and said, "I won't visit your assemblies because they stink." There is only a sweet smelling savour when we have this love. Then there is a sweetness that goes up to God that He is pleased and He pours out His pleasure.

First John 4: 14-16 *We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death.* You can't know it because you don't smoke anymore or go to the movies. People quit smoking because they are afraid of cancer. That is no sign that you are saved. You may say that you go to church three times a week. There are people who go to church more than three times a week. You can keep on testing yourself. What is the real test that you can know that you have passed from death unto life? When you love the brethren, you can know that this love has been shed abroad in your heart. John made it very plain; he was a strong preacher. There is no middle ground. You either love or hate. *Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer.* We have murderers trying to teach Sunday School; murderers trying to preach; and murderers trying to sing. Hatred, bitterness, and unforgiveness are in the hearts of people. They are carrying it right on. In God's sight we are a murderer. I just read it to you. If I hate my brother, I commit murder in my heart under New Testament law. *Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and you know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him. Hereby perceive (we show) we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.* I John 3:14 is a proof to a Christian, himself and to other Christians. It is a language that tells out and an argument that convinces the world. Any of you who have read about church history have read about [the man who said], "Your Master made you all brethren. I've never seen people who [so] love one another." What made him say that? One day as he was watching them lead a man up to be beheaded, during the time when so many Christians were killed, they asked the man to recant on his testimony of Christ but he wouldn't. They were ready to raise the guillotine to cut his head off and another young man stepped up before the emperor and said, "Please don't kill him. He has a wife and five children. I don't have any family. Kill me in his stead." And they killed him. The emperor said that he had never seen such love. The Master had made them all brethren. This is the thing that Paul was talking about whereby we can stop the mouth of the gainsayer. Paul said in 1 Corinthians 13 that *love never fails.* When everything else fails, love will work. This is the key that we need to get a hold of to start convincing the world in a greater way.

Love Perfected In Us

I John 4:7 *Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and everyone that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God: for God is love. In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another. No man has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us.* What does *his love is perfected in us* mean? It means His love is doing what it was sent to do. What was God's love sent abroad in our hearts for? So that we would love one another by the very love that He loved us. Not our love or something that we manufacture; this is beyond natural strain. It is the very love of God shed abroad in our hearts that causes us to love. He went on to say, "Don't say that you love God who you haven't seen if you don't love your brother who you have seen." I have found in my pastoral experience that people will get up and say, "I love everybody!" But when you name off a few you find that they don't love somebody; they love everybody. This gets down to the brother you see. I dealt, not long ago, with people who were all excited about the mission field (and I am too). They told me how they 'loved those people over there'. I told them to hold it and asked them about Brother So-in-So and if they loved him. They answered, "Hmph." It is very easy to love people we never see or never will see. The struggle is with the ones we are seeing. This is the love of God.

Closing

I have tried to clarify some misrepresentations and lack of understanding for the meaning of love. We dealt with three different words and there are more. Do we have agape love? How can we know? Here is the test: It will love when there is no love returned. Second, it will never quit. You may lose it but if it is there it will never quit. Agape love never finds an end. He loved them to the end. Now God only teaches us about this for one reason: He wants us to have it. He doesn't teach us about it just so that we will understand it. He wants us to possess it in our hearts and lives. There are so many people who I have been able to help over the country who had like and love mixed up. They thought because they didn't like everything that someone did they needed to go to the altar and get it clear. This will cause you to love people you do not like in every way. There is not a thing in the Bible that says we will be brought into such unity that we will like everything everyone does. There will never be; but thank God we can love one another just like Christ loved us. Is the love of God shed abroad in your heart? If it isn't, friend, you

can come and meet God's conditions. He is ready to shed it abroad in every heart. This will bring about a definite proof so that all men will know. Why did He say that ALL men would know? Because we are doing something that men can't do. We are in the greatest educated world. In the last fifty years there has been more understanding come to our world due to wars and such. We have put people on the moon and we are shooting for the stars. There is one thing, though, we have never learned in America: how to live together. Right here in our city we are building a bigger jail. Why? The judge had to quit committing people because there is no room in the jail. What is the answer? People do not know how to live together. They never will know how unless you and I get this experience and show the world that there is a community of people who are bound together with chords of love that no disruption can cause to disintegrate. ●