

***All scripture is given by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness - NRSV***

***All scripture is given by God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: - KJ***

From you Bible studies, you will recall Moses. He had problems educating the children of Israel over a span of 37 years. In reading those passages there are times when he seemed to wish for a short cut out of his problems and would have liked God to take over and teach the children of Israel a lesson for once and forever. However, from the days in the Garden of Eden God has been teaching his people, chastening them and continually giving them a new start. I suppose we could refer to the Ten Commandments as the first actual record of Scripture that was laid out for God’s children to specifically teach them and turn them back to the right path. Some have suggested the Ten Commandments are a road map to a holy life.

Today we are guilty of giving up on many things in our world including people and we often forget that none of us has a right to self righteousness that permits us to mentally chasten others and live our lives as though we are OK because we can say we know Jesus Christ, or because we go to church regularly, or because we live our lives doing good things. Many people from all walks of life have made remarks to the effect that we could have things as good as they were in the good old days. This can cover many avenues of life including religion. You have probably heard people express that the world and the country and the community were all a better and more Godly place when everyone went to church on Sunday. In some ways it well may have been. But if that were true then I think that some part of the churches’ mission failed drastically because it is obvious by the attendance in worship across the country today that the fullness of the Spirit was not always present in the old religious activities. Humanly, I feel some sense of nostalgia with my memories of days gone by but I believe that the Church is readying itself for a time of revival and that it will be healthy and thriving again. My thoughts from my past to the present, reflect that the majority of people in a house of worship today are here because they want to be. Few people attend worship today out of fear or dictates from parents or grandparents. What I find remarkable is that the message of the Church has not changed in all these years. It is amazing that the bound writings of the Holy Bible have been the only guide that we can hold out as our rule book, our map and the only true way of being able to find our way back into relationship with God.

One of my thoughts this morning is, *Old Time Religion*. You may wish to disagree with me but I do not think that the world or the church needs any more religion. The world has more religion than it knows how to cope with. That was the problem with the Israelites in the wilderness. But there is one religion that keeps coming back, a religion that cannot be suppressed in spite of humanity’s attempted destruction throughout the generations. That is the religion of the one, true and only God. That was the religion of the past and it is the religion of the future. It was back through the ages the religion with hope and reward.

Religion is more than just discipline. It was a religion that made life worth living. A religion that makes life worth living today. That religion forgave and loved the people of Israel enough to give them water, manna, raiment and life itself into the wilderness and

gives us the Bread of Life which is Jesus Christ. What the world needs and what our churches need today, what Christians need today, is not more religion but more of Christ in their religion. The old always became something new in each generation from the Israelites to the prophets, to the first disciples, even to us. Some 2,000+ years later it is ever new today. For those who have never heard the name of Jesus as Lord, it is new and renewing. In that light, the God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, David and Solomon, that same God provides a newness to each one of us here. But to be a part of that newness, each one of us must be prepared to take activating steps to follow Him and take upon ourselves the new coat of salvation. How can I find salvation? I cannot go out and buy it. There is an expression that says that if it can't be bought, it can't be worth having. For you and I, salvation is free from silver and gold. But it does carry a price, a great price because we are sinners. It carries a price that has been paid with the blood of the Lamb of God as he hung on an old wooden cross outside Jerusalem's city wall.

The road, the map or the steps to salvation is often a text that many Christians seem to overlook. I have been asked why we need to talk about it. Some feel that they have heard the name of Jesus Christ ever since their childhood, so who needs to know even more? You and I do. A lot of people know the name, *Jesus*, but have never known the person, Jesus. Each one of us who wants to be genuinely Christian, needs to know Jesus enough so that each one of us is able to introduce another soul to Christ. If we are Christians we must be witnesses for Christ which means we must know the steps to salvation. II Timothy is clear that ALL scripture is for instruction but I want to take a few minutes to commend to you what has been taught to me to be the basic 14 steps that should be known by every Christian:

- 1) Romans 3:23 - all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God - even me
- 2) Romans 6:23 - the wages of sin is death but the gift of God is eternal life - eternal life even for me - through Jesus Christ our Lord.
- 3) Acts 16: 30,31 - Jesus was asked as we ask, what must I do to be saved? V. 31, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved.
- 4) Ephesians 2: 8,9 - so I've heard of Jesus Christ. I am a good person. Ephesians teaches that it is by grace we are saved, through faith that is not of ourselves but it is a gift from God - just like the water from the rock to the children of Israel. God is giving us a gift that keeps on giving. V. 9 clearly states that it is a gift and not by good works. In other words, we cannot goodie our way into heaven. We cannot buy our way into heaven. It is by faith alone and no one can make it on their own without faith.
- 5) Romans 10: 9,10 - To gain salvation we must individually make a personal confession with our mouth. We must speak openly the name of the Lord Jesus, and not just say it but believe it in our hearts, that God has raised Jesus from the dead. V. 10 states clearly that the heart must believe, and the mouth confess, before our relationship to Christ is made over into salvation.
- 6) Luke 18:13 - the story of the tax collector who would not look up to heaven as he cried out, *Lord be merciful to me a sinner*. This is an example that we should be humble, admitting our sinfulness and that each of us, must individually call upon God to extend his mercy.
- 7) John 3: 16,17 - This is a statement of fact that God so loved the world that He sent his only Son into the world so that those who couldn't believe might then believe and have everlasting life. God does not want any soul to perish. How often it is said that if Christ

himself appeared in our midst, many would still not want to listen. But God sent Jesus not to condemn the world but to save it.

8) **Romans 8: 38,39** - each person must be so convinced that we might also say, *For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God - love which is only in Jesus Christ.*

9) **John 10: 27-30** - *My sheep hear my voice. I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish. No one will snatch them out of my hand. The Father and I are one.* True Christians will know the voice and the message of Christ calling and will respond, and will have eternal life because they responded. Jesus does this in the name of God and he underlines this when he declares, *my Father and I are one.*

10) **II Corinthians 6:2** - When must I give up the fun and games of this world. We are taught that *now* is the time of salvation. Now, I have heard. Now is the time of decision. *...now is the accepted time. ...now is the day of salvation.*

11) **Mark 16:16** - Some might say loosely, I believe that Jesus existed and I believe that he really live on this earth and I believe he was sent here by God, I know I am human and because I am human I must be a sinner, but so what? I recognize Christ. I verbally admit him. What more do I need to do. Mark 16: 16 clearly states a believer must be baptized and unless he/she is baptized with the faith, he/she will be cut off and shall be condemned. This is not merely water baptism but refers directly to baptism by the Holy Spirit, or believer's baptism, which can only be brought upon anyone by confession of faith.

12) **John 20: 31** - We frequently refer to God's Word as, *The Old Bible.* We have referred to the oldness of the message as some people would refer to it as being out dated because it is over 2,000 years old. This passage states that the Word has been written so that we might examine it, that we might believe Jesus Christ the Son of God and that in believing we might have life, life through his name.

13) **Matthew 5:16** - Again we might try the excuse as before to put off our believing and commitment until a more convenient time, but in this verse, unbelievers are referred to as people who can see the light but stay back from it and this is a rejection that will not be tolerated. Once you know about Christ and the message, it is not like looking a new car on a lot that we can keep looking at until it is convenient to take ownership. Here we are challenged to take ownership of Jesus immediately lest we leave it until we have no further opportunity. The Book of Revelation refers to the time of the end when no one shall have the time to even look back, no further time to go back and get a coat, no time to go back and set their house in order. We are also taught that no one knows the hour of the coming of Christ, so once we know about Christ and we are aware of the consequences, can anyone take a chance that the Lord will call in the next ten minutes or later today? To know about it and to fail to respond to the Light of the world, is to fall into the Shadow of Death, the snare of Satan.

14) **Luke 9: 24-26** - This might be the challenge of challenges. No one can save their own life, but we are to be prepared to fall or loose our life before others in the name of Christ, and we are told that it will not be a loss, but saved. You might be one of those who has the knot in the stomach. You know that Christ is real and you know that there is nothing beyond here without Christ so you are commanded that to be ashamed to speak the name of Christ, to be ashamed to identify with Christ, Christ will be ashamed of such a person also when it is time to go to glory.

**Salvation is simple. It is easy. It is free of burden. It frees the soul from death, but it demands that we know and understand our relationship with Jesus. It is clear that there is only one kind of person who is fit to be called a Christian. That is one who is a fully committed to Christ. Amen.**