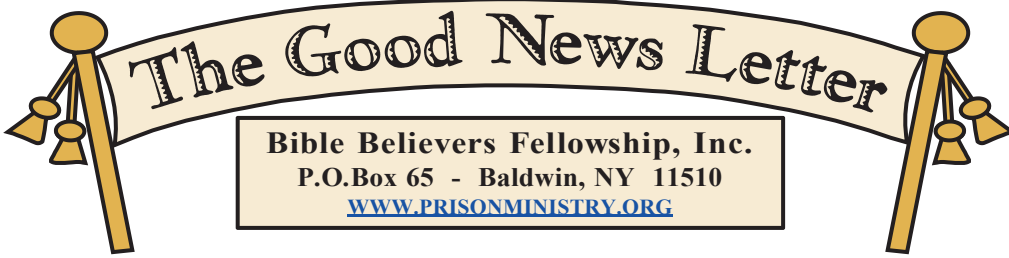




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TAX-EXEMPT

"Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" MARK 16:15

April 2025

FROM US TO YOU

In 1961 there was a film made by Warner Bro. called "Stop the World. I Want to Get Off." That's the sentiment of many people these days. This world does not feel like the same world many of us older folk grew up in. Things have changed so much! This has never been a perfect world. How can it be? The devil is running it (Matthew 4:5-10). Adam was supposed to run this world. God gave it to him to run (Genesis 1:26). However, when Adam disobeyed God, Satan got control of him and everything he had. The good news is that Adam was only given the world to run for a specific period of time, and that time is almost up (see Revelation 12:12). Then Jesus will come back (Revelation 19:11-21) to the earth and the devil and his evil angels (Revelation 12:9) will be thrown into Hell (Revelation 20:1-2). *"Therefore rejoice, you heavens and you who dwell in them! But woe to the earth and the sea, because the devil has gone down to you! He is filled with fury, because he knows that his time is short"* (Rev. 12:12 NIV).

Many years ago there was a song called, "What the world needs now is love sweet love." What society doesn't realize is that greater love hath no one than to give his life for his enemies. We humans are in this evil world because we sinned against God (Romans 3:23). We became God's enemies. Even so, God's love and compassion was so great for us that God sent His own Son into this world to suffer and die in our place. God is the very essence of love for us (see 1 John 4:16). People don't realize how far they have fallen from their Creator. Such hatred is in the news every day that we hear about wars, killings, and attacks. As far as this world is concerned, "what the world needs now is love" was never as true as today. Today there are people who are so lost that they want to strike out at anyone, even those who do what is good. Donald Trump, a billionaire, could have had a nice easy life if he had not been so worried about America. He endured much hatred from liberals, who tried to bankrupt him, put him in prison, and assassinate him two times. However, he won a landslide election and wants to "make America great again." Elon Musk, the richest man in the world, is volunteering to help Trump eliminate waste, fraud, and abuse, and yet he has been getting death threats.

This world is a mess and innocent people are suffering. Jesus told His disciples, *"... Watch out that no one deceives you. For many will come in My name, claiming, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many. You will hear of wars and rumors of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. All these are the beginning of birth pains. Then you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of Me"* (Matthew 24:4-9 NIV). The birth pains are because the Lord's future control of this planet is pushing out the devil's kingdom on earth. And Jesus

was speaking about the antisemitism that currently exists, the Jew hatred, which is sadly too abundant these days throughout the world.

The Jews are hated by Satan, because Christ, our Savior, came to earth as a Jew. All of God's prophets were Jewish, and the Bible was written by Jews. The devil hates women as well, because our Savior came into the world through the body of a woman. Christians will be hated as well. So be prepared to take a stand! As Jesus said, *"No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other; or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other..."* (Matthew 6:24 NIV). You will eventually come to a fork in the road. Which way will you go? Will it be for the things of this world, or will it be towards God's kingdom. *"Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through*

it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it. Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. By their fruit you will recognize them..." (Matthew 7:13-16 NIV).

There is no easy way of getting off this merry-go-round. A lot of foolish people commit suicide, which is the worst decision. When you put God in charge of your life, He will give you the courage to live for Him. There's no easy way to put it. When you choose to control your own life and commit suicide, you will end up in Hell. So choose the direction toward Christ. Repent of your sins and accept Jesus as your Lord and Master. Choose eternity in Heaven. Nothing in this world is worth eternity in Hell (Mark 9:47-49). *"But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars—their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death"* (Rev. 21:8 NIV).

John the apostle was given the revelation of what happens to those who choose Jesus Christ. He said, *"And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And He said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful. And He said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely"* (Revelation 21:1-6 KJV).

Happy Easter everyone, *Eric and Anne Kaestner*



The Wheat and the Chaff

By Anne Kaestner

Have you ever wondered why it is that there are so many differences between Christian churches? One teaches one thing and another teaches something totally different. For example, one church teaches infant **baptism** and another teaches infant **dedication to God** and adult baptism. They both call themselves “Christian” but their doctrines are different in many respects. So it must be confusing to the outsider. Which one is right? And why do they both say they are Christian and yet teach different things? Both of them use the Bible in their sermons. So how do you know which one is right and which one is wrong? And why would any of them teach what is not correct? God the Son, Jesus Christ, only came in the body of one man. He was not divided. So how can His doctrines be so far apart? This is the answer. Christ’s doctrines are **not** so far apart. They are laid out with clarity in the Bible in the teachings of Christ and His apostles. Therefore, let’s go back to the beginning and see what the Bible tells us, and who said what.

Let’s take the example I gave of infant baptisms. Many churches have them. On the surface it seems like a godly practice. So let’s see what the Bible says on the subject. After our Lord was born, “*on the eighth day, when it was time to circumcise Him, He was named Jesus, the name the angel had given Him before He had been conceived. When the time of their purification according to the Law of Moses had been completed, Joseph and Mary took Him to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord*” (Luke 2:21-22 NIV). That was **not** a water baptism. They took the baby Jesus to the temple and dedicated Him to God the Father. The Lord’s water baptism occurred many years later, when Jesus was an adult. His parents didn’t have anything to do with it. He made the decision on His own that He wanted to be water baptized.

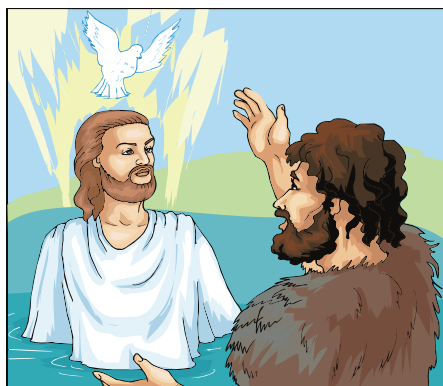
“*Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John. But John tried to deter Him, saying, ‘I need to be baptized by You, and do You come to me?’ Jesus replied, ‘Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness.’ Then John consented. As soon as Jesus was baptized, He went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting on Him. And a voice from heaven said, ‘This is My Son, whom I love; with Him I am well pleased.’”* (Matthew 3:13-17 NIV). So, as an adult, Jesus made the **choice** to be water baptized. He did this as an example for us to follow. For it is God’s will that we follow the example of Jesus, not another human being (John 13:15, 1 Peter 2:21-23).

The apostle Paul put it this way, “*I appeal to you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another so that there may be no divisions among you and that you may be perfectly united in mind and thought. My brothers, some from Chloe’s household have informed me that there are quarrels among you. What I mean is this: One of you says, ‘I follow Paul,’ another, ‘I follow Apollos;’ another, ‘I follow Cephas,’ still another, ‘I follow Christ.’ Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Were you baptized into the name of Paul?”* (1 Corinthians 1:10-13 NIV). In her book, “It’s My Turn” Ruth Bell Graham wrote about something that caused trouble in her marriage. She was the daughter of Presbyterian missionaries in China. Her husband, Billy Graham, was a Baptist. Ruth wrote about a time when Billy brought home several men from his Baptist church. Their purpose was to convince Ruth to become a Baptist, like her husband. It didn’t work the way they planned it. Ruth was livid. She felt “How dare they try to

change my denomination!”

When Christ is our example, we don’t have that problem. Denominations are something that doesn’t happen in the Catholic Church. The Catholic doctrine is very different from Protestant. The name “Protestant,” comes from the word “protest,” meaning they are “protesting” against Catholic doctrine. In the Catholic Church Christ is given lip service (Mark 7:6), but the Pope is the head of the church and the church itself is the example. Priests are referred to with the prefix “Father.” Yet to real Christians who follow the Lord’s teachings and are Born Again (John 3:3), Jesus said, “*...do not call anyone on earth ‘father; for you have one Father, and He is in Heaven*” (Matthew 23:9 NIV). During your first birth, the one that gave you a human body, you inherited the contaminated blood of Adam (see Genesis 3:1-24). So, spiritually, when you repent of your sins and accept Christ as your Savior, you are washed clean, spiritually, in the blood of Christ. That is being born again. So God the Father is your Father. When I read that in the Bible I stopped calling my natural father “father.” He said, “Oh, that’s to do with the Catholics.” But the scripture says, “*...do not call anyone on earth ‘father; for you have one Father, and He is in Heaven*” (Matthew 23:9 NIV). I was an adult when I found that out. Therefore, from then on I called him Pop. He’s dead now. He died about ten years ago, but he accepted the name “Pop.”

Jesus didn’t even call Joseph “father.” The Gospel of Luke bears that out. “*When He was twelve years old, they went up to the Feast, according to the custom. After the Feast was over, while His parents were returning home, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but they were unaware of it. Thinking He was in their company, they traveled on for a day. Then they began looking for Him among their relatives and friends. When they did not find Him, they went back to Jerusalem to look for Him. After three days they found Him in the temple courts, sitting among the*



teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. Everyone who heard Him was amazed at His understanding and His answers. When His parents saw Him, they were astonished. His mother said to Him, ‘Son, why have You treated us like this? Your father and I have been anxiously searching for You.’ ‘Why were you searching for Me?’ He asked. ‘Didn’t you know I had to be in My Father’s house?’” (Luke 2:42-49 NIV). Mary referred to Joseph as His father. But Jesus knew who His real father was.

During His adult ministry, John the Baptist warned the Pharisees about Jesus. They tried to look holy and righteous before the people (Matthew 6:1-8) but John knew they were hypocrites. He said, “*I baptize you with water for repentance. But after me will come one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not fit to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire. His winnowing fork is in His hand, and He will clear His threshing floor, gathering His wheat into the barn and burning up the chaff with unquenchable fire*” (Matthew 3:11-12 NIV). John was talking about the distinction between water baptism, which he performed, and the baptism of the Holy Spirit, which Christ would give to His followers. It’s what Jesus promised His disciples.

The disciples were upset when Jesus told them that He was going away. So He wanted to comfort them with these words, “*If you love Me, you will obey what I command. And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Counselor to be with you forever—the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept Him, because it neither sees Him*

nor knows Him. But you know Him, for He lives with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. Before long, the world will not see Me anymore, but you will see Me. Because I live, you also will live” (John 14:15-19 NIV). What Jesus was talking about was the Holy Spirit. When Jesus left Heaven to come into this world and pay for our sins, He stripped Himself of His own power and ability as God the Son. If He had kept His own power, the false religious leaders in His day would have been too frightened of Him to arrest and crucify Him. Even His own disciples were afraid of Him when He briefly took His own power back during the transformation (Matthew 17:1-8). Therefore, Jesus performed all of His miracles through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus was saying that the Holy Spirit wouldn't come to them until after He left them. He said, “...I tell you the truth: It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you” (John 16:7 NIV). The Holy Spirit did come to them after Jesus was crucified, died, was resurrected and returned to Heaven. “When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them” (Acts 2:1-4 NIV). This was the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. It is referred to as a baptism by fire. Instead of being immersed in water, they were saturated in the Holy Spirit and able to speak in languages they had never learned. Remember, the tongues of fire is a part of the Spirit of God. “...Our ‘God is a consuming fire’” (Hebrews 12:29 NIV).

Matthew 3:11-12 bears a resemblance to a scripture in Isaiah. It says, “All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away” (Isaiah 64:6 NIV). God knew that there were no righteous works that we could do that would wash away our sin. Paul said, “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast” (Ephesians 2:8-9 NIV). What the scriptures have in common, is in regard to our sins “blowing” or “sweeping” us away. Jesus told His disciples, “I am the true vine, and My Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in Me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit He prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. Remain in Me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in Me. I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in Me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from Me you can do nothing. If anyone does not remain in Me, he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned” (John 15:1-6 NIV).

Wheat is valuable and can be used to feed starving people and keep them alive. Chaff is garbage and is just thrown out and burned. It serves no useful purpose. John the Baptist was telling the Pharisees that they were not serving God, the way they think they were. They were trying to please God through good works, but they were not serving God the way God wanted them too. It bears a relationship with the story of Cain and Abel. They both tried to please God. But Cain was a farmer and Abel was a shepherd. Cain worked very hard to grow his fruits and vegetables by his aching back and the sweat of his brow. But all Abel had to do was to sit under a shady tree and

watch the sheep. God wanted a sacrifice. So Cain gathered up a bunch of his best fruit and vegetables and offered them to God. Cain was very proud of the produce he had grown. He was sure that God would realize how hard he had worked to grow them.

All Abel had to offer God was one of his lambs. However, God wanted a blood sacrifice, symbolic of the sacrifice of Christ which would eventually be on Calvary (Luke 23:33). “In the course of time Cain brought some of the fruits of the soil as an offering to the LORD. But Abel brought fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock. The LORD looked with favor on Abel and his offering, but on Cain and his offering He did not look with favor. So Cain was very angry, and his face was downcast” (Genesis 4:3-5 NIV). Cain got so angry at his brother, Abel, that he killed him (Genesis 4:8). That made the situation so much worse. God is not interested in how hard we work for Him. As sinful humans, we can't possibly pay for our own sin. Christ did that. We must cling to Him, and obey what He tells us to do (Luke 6:46-49). When a vine of fruit doesn't produce fruit it is worthless, the same as a human that doesn't repent of his sins and cling to Christ. That's why Jesus told his followers to cling to Him. It's the only way that we can get the precious nourishment through our Holy Vine that enables us to grow good fruit for Him. If we don't produce that spiritual fruit, we are worthless to God.

What is the spiritual fruit? It is living our lives in such a way that people see the difference in us, and it brings more souls into the kingdom of God. There's a difference. “The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will **not** inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other” (Galatians 5:19-26 NIV).

Jesus told His disciples a parable. He said, “...The kingdom of Heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field. But while everyone was sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away. When the wheat sprouted and formed heads, then the weeds also appeared. The owner's servants came to him and said, ‘Sir, didn't you sow good seed in your field? Where then did the weeds come from?’ ‘An enemy did this,’ he replied. The servants asked him, ‘Do you want us to go and pull them up?’ ‘No,’ he answered, ‘because while you are pulling the weeds, you may root up the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time I will tell the harvesters: First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn’” (Matthew 13:24-30 NIV). Jesus was comparing the difference between members of a congregation. The good soil represents those who are able to grow good fruit for His Kingdom. The weeds were sown among the congregation, making them worthless.

This scripture can be compared to the one about the Sower. It makes it easier to understand. “...A farmer went out to sow his seed. As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants. Still other



seed fell on good soil, where it produced a crop—a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown” (Matthew 13:3-8 NIV). The Holy Spirit is the Sower. He lives in the hearts of those who love God. They have received the “Baptism of the Holy Spirit.”

Jesus explains the parable. He said, “Listen then to what the parable of the sower means: When anyone hears the message about the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is the seed sown along the path. The one who received the seed that fell on rocky places is the man who hears the word and at once receives it with joy. But since he has no root, he lasts only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, he quickly falls away. The one who received the seed that fell among the thorns is the man who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke it, making it unfruitful. But the one who received the seed that fell on good soil is the man who hears the word and understands it. He produces a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown” (Matthew 13:18-23 NIV).

The weeds were false doctrine that was spread by the devil. And the churchgoing person is deceived by it. However, he goes to church because he thinks that it makes him more holy. But he’s hearing the wrong message from a false prophet (see Matthew 7:15), so it’s not doing him any good. The Sower planted good seed, the true message of salvation. But in his case, other things worked against it. He didn’t understand it, or the problems of life overwhelmed it in his heart, or the demons came along like birds, and prevented the seed of faith from taking route. That’s why there are so many different denominations. The leaders of the denominations make certain decisions based on their own way of thinking. It doesn’t necessarily mean that their hearts aren’t right with God.

For example, some churches believe that it is sinful to drink wine or any kind of alcohol. I wrote an article about this long ago. It’s in my ebook called “[Controversial Issues In The Church.](#)” As a result, they take Holy Communion with grape juice instead. It’s not the kind of thing that will make you lose your salvation, because they mean well. But the word Jesus used that was translated “wine” means an intoxicated drink. Jesus drank wine Himself. It is symbolic of His blood and redemption. Wine has alcohol in it. Alcohol is a liquid that cleanses skin. The Good Samaritan poured oil and wine into the man’s wounds (Luke 10:34). It is symbolic of the blood of Christ cleansing our souls. [Incidentally, oil is symbolic of the Holy Spirit as well (1 Samuel 16:13).] The grapes that make wine are crushed, as the body of Christ was for us (see John 19:33-34). And the wine is stored in a dark place until it is ready to be used. It is symbolic of the body of Jesus being placed in a tomb for 3 days (Mark 15:44-47 and 1 Corinthians 15:3-4). Using something cheap like grape juice is a type of blasphemy. Only real wine is proper.

Now let’s go back to the message Jesus was giving us in Matthew 13:24-30. There are many churches around, but there are not many strong Christians in America anymore. If there were, we would not have so many problems in this country. Some churches have backslidden so far away from God that the only Christianity they have left is lip-service. Jesus said of such people, “You hypocrites! Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you: ‘These people honor Me with their lips, but their hearts are far from Me. They worship Me in vain; their teachings are but rules taught by men’” (Matthew 15:7-9 NIV). Sadly recently, on the day he was inaugurated,

President Trump attended a church in Washington D.C. that fell into the lip-service category. It was the opposite of the teachings of the Bible! He didn’t like it. Thank God Trump had the discernment to know the difference. However, there are other churches that try to preach the truth and the congregation falls into two categories, the wheat and the chaff. You could be sitting next to someone in the congregation who always attends the church every week. They might be a very nice person. Perhaps they even carry their Bible with them. It makes them look more righteous. Yet they don’t really know the Lord at all. Their relationship with God is all about the church. They enjoy the social atmosphere there, the picnic every year, the special events. And they enjoy the company of Christians. However, they don’t really know the Lord at all!

People, going to a church doesn’t make you a Christian. It might make you feel more righteous. But God knows your heart. You can’t deceive Him (Galatians 6:7). He knows who really loves Him and who doesn’t. And there are big differences of doctrine between the churches. So going to a church doesn’t make you a Christian. The one thing that can make you a Christian is loving and serving Christ! The first thing you have to do is repent of your sins to God, not the priest or anyone else. Talk directly to God! It’s a very personal relationship between God and you. Tell Him that you accept His Son, Jesus, as your personal Lord and Savior. And make a commitment to change direction, with His help and guidance!

Now that you’re a Christian, it’s important that you take your commitment to God seriously. Don’t think to yourself, “I’m a Christian now. I’m going to Heaven” and

go back to the same old lifestyle you had before.

If you were in an inappropriate job, leave it. Trust God to guide you to something better.

You can’t continue to be a bar tender, a comedian, an illegal drug dealer, a nightclub singer or nightclub waitress, and still serve God. That takes faith, and you need to trust God and stay in prayer. But you simply can’t serve God and the devil at the same time.

I remember something Pat Robertson once said back in the days I used to listen to Him. He was friends with actor, Efreim Zimbalist Jr., who, supposedly, became a Christian. However, he continued his career as an actor. After some time had passed, Zimbalist had to play a part where he had to get into bed naked with an actress. Robertson asked him, “How could you play a part like that? You’re a Christian now!” He said that Zimbalist said to him, “But I’m still an actor. I have to make a living.”

People, listen to me. Jesus said, “No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money” (Matthew 6:24 NIV). Billy Sunday (1862-1935) was a famous sports star who **turned** from the ways of his past when he accepted Jesus Christ as his Lord and Savior. He did not focus his ministry on his own past laurels, then tack on a Christian label. He repented of his past life in this world and chose to live by faith (2 Corinthians 5:7). When he quit baseball in 1891, he was at the peak of his career. But he gave it all up for Christ! That year Sunday had set a record of 90 bases stolen in 116 games. The Philadelphia Phillies offered him \$400 a month. Cincinnati offered him \$500 a month. Yet he took a “Secretary of Religious Department” job for the YMCA for \$83 a month. In 1894 the Pittsburgh Pirates offered him \$2,000 a month to return to baseball. Sunday took a job as an advance man for Evangelist J. Wilbur Chapman, making \$40 a week! When God calls someone to preach the Gospel, He tests them severely. Sunday passed the preliminary tests of faith and God eventually gave him a huge ministry. So step out in faith. Trust God, and He can make it happen!

