

Effective Christian Education

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The Meaning of Christian Education

What I mean by Christian education is the activity wherein we as Christians seek to win other people to become Christians and to help them grow as Christians. This whole project of Christian education you ordinarily associate with the church. You see it in Sunday School, in young people's work, women's work, men's work, and various congregational activities. There are special services, such as revival services. There are printed books and pamphlets that are distributed. Hymns are sung setting various ideas before the public. I would include prayers that are offered in public in which one person who believes tries to help another person to understand and to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. All of that is included when we refer to Christian education.

It takes place in the church and in the home. It takes place in any one of us Christians as we witness where we are. Perhaps much of this is done in an unconscious way. We may not even be aware of the effect we are having upon other people. But some of it is done deliberately. There is such a thing as actually seeking to set forth the gospel in such a way that people can understand and can believe. That is the part that I'll be talking about.

Christian education is really an unnatural thing. You will see that we do not just distribute information. We actually are seeking to reach a certain commitment on the part of the individual. We actually are trying to get the people who are listening to us as we teach and as we preach to understand how they can relate themselves to God by faith. Then we are trying to urge them to do that. It is an unnatural program, and by that I do not mean antinatural, against nature. It is above nature in such a way that it is very easily distorted and changed. In other words, human beings can undertake to do it in a human way in such a way that it changes the whole picture. Because of this, I have felt it would be a good thing to review its nature and to restate its purpose. For instance, I am impressed with the thought that public opinion and popular notions about what a Christian is and what a Christian ought to be can confuse us to such an extent that we do not even realize what we ourselves are supposed to be doing. What we are doing can be misrepresented to the world at large until it appears as if we were doing something quite different than what we actually are doing. This will become clearer as I go along.

I feel it is very important that we keep in mind why we are witnessing for Christ and how we are witnessing for Christ, unless we should find ourselves in this whole activity and work of Christian education for inferior reasons. We could be trying to do this as human beings in an inadequate way and have inadequate aims. We also could, strive to accomplish our purpose and task by the use of natural, inadequate, human means. Let me illustrate what I mean. Take the Sunday School, for example. If we are not careful, we will find that public opinion will move us to think of the Sunday School as a sort of community exercise, such as a good community protection against juvenile delinquency. I am sure you have heard on every side that if all children and young people would go to Sunday School, we would not have so much juvenile delinquency. I am not denying that, but let us see what results from that notion. There will be people who will say, "I think that's why we ought to have Sunday School." I am afraid sometimes that some of us actually are promoting Sunday School with the idea that we want to try and keep the boys and girls from going wrong. We want to keep them out of jail. So we will take them to Sunday School and teach them the right way.

Now there are a few things we ought to recognize about this. In the first place, very few of the pupils that actually attend our Sunday Schools would ever become socially delinquent. There are any number of children in the community that are going to go bad,, but most of them never would come to Sunday School even if you had a Sunday School on every block. They just would not come. Mind you, this does not refer only to the poor. This is not just a case of poor people. There are people that are wealthy that never think of sending their children to Sunday School. Some of their children become delinquent too, even if they do have money and even if they do have an education.

Not only could we think of the Sunday School as a community project to protect against juvenile delinquency and in that case actually think less of it than it really deserves, but we may even find ourselves trying to win persons by educating them and training their better human impulses. Then, the first thing you know we may think that being a Christian means being a nice person, an honest person and a person good for the community, who keeps out of jail and obeys the rules and regulations. We can make out of Sunday School a kind of an educational project on the assumption that it would be good for everyone to come and that we will train them to be better people than they were before. All of this overlooks this simple, basic fact - you must be born again. The whole Sunday School enterprise will be off on the wrong foot and never come to anything permanent unless you recognize that what we as Christians are seeking to do is to win people to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. Thereby the power of God can be available in their lives by the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, which will be operative in them through the faith that they will have as they come to know about Him.

Let me go on to illustrate something further about this. We can get to the place where we actually think of young people's work as a socializing project in which we help our teenagers to grow up and mature. In so planning and thinking, we quite often overlook the fact that they will mature anyway. There are a lot of boys and girls of the teenage group that will never go to Sunday School when they get to be men and women. You do not need young people's work organized on Sunday evening in order to help your young people grow up. They are going to grow up. Of course some people will say, "We want them to grow up the right way." And the first thing you know public opinion will be such that it will move us to try to train the next generation of people by dealing with our teenagers, to train them in preferred principles of living, those, principles that our current adult leaders choose to think are the good ways. They would have us bring to young people the problems of living in the world today and try to show them how they ought to live. If you will just look at the agenda of the subjects that are dealt with at our usual young people's conferences, you will see what I mean. The young people are being treated as though this was an educational program intended to make them wise and smart about what should be done tomorrow. Often overlooked entirely is the fact that the young people's program could be helping each individual young person to become personally acquainted with the living Lord Jesus Christ. He could then, by His Holy Spirit in them, guide them in their life in a way that would be acceptable to God and would not need anybody to teach them what to do. God Himself would show them. I am not going to belittle the fact that information is good, and I certainly have no objection to education as such. As a matter of fact I taught school for many years, and I am very much in favor of everybody becoming just as well educated as possible. But I am talking about the matter of Christian education. I am saying that if we do not keep in mind what we are trying to do, public interest may lead us to think that what we ought to be doing is to try to train young people into being good citizens. The public does not mean anything bad by it; they just do not know any different. There is nothing bad about that, but it is not good enough.

In Christian education we also try to help the adults to grow in grace and in knowledge. The popular

common idea of what a church is for will turn congregational fellowship and even the pastoral relationship into some sort of project in psychotherapy, perhaps. It would lead us to assume that what we want to do is to help our adults achieve mental health so that they can avoid tensions and conflicts. This would altogether ignore the fact that we Christians have one solution for the problems of living in this world: it is to be personally committed to the Lord Jesus Christ, to trust in Him and to let the Holy Spirit of God take the things of the Lord Jesus Christ and show them to us that we might know the will of God and that we might so do.

Let me make one more comment along this line. In Christian education from time to time we have special emphasis. We have special meetings, for example, in which we encourage everybody in the community to come and think about the Christian gospel. Many times in these revival services individuals are brought to a decision about the Lord Jesus Christ. But if we are not careful, we will start to promote evangelism and the revived services in order to save our nation, to save our society, or to save the world from economic or social collapse. Almost with panic we will say we might have a depression, or there might be another war. In order to stop these things we would go ahead and promote evangelism and revival. Now not one of these things I have suggested to you here is bad, and I have nothing against any one of them. The only thing is that while each one is good,, it is not good enough. Those reasons that I have outlined to you are not the real reasons to promote Christian education.

We need another fresh candid look at what we are doing, and for that we will have to start at the very beginning and ask ourselves, "What do you mean by the word Christian? When is a person a Christian?" A Christian is a person in whom God is working, by His grace, according to His promises in Christ Jesus. God is working through His Holy Spirit, by His grace, that which belongs to the Lord Jesus Christ. It is Christ in you that is the hope of glory. A Christian is a person in whom this is taking place. Our part as Christians in this is that the individual must believe in God. In order to believe in God, a person has to know about Him. In order to know about God, someone has to teach, and that is where Christians come in.

As we commence thinking about Christian education, we realize basically that back of the whole thing there is the God of the Bible. He is the creator of the heavens and the earth, the God who is the judge of all the earth, the God who made man and who will judge men, the God who watches over man in everything that He does. Man's life here on earth will develop as God will deal with him. And God will deal with him according to His law that is revealed to us in the Scripture. That God will deal with man according to His law amounts to this: if man does what God wants him to do, God will bless him. If man does not do what God wants him to do, God will curse him. We want man to obey so that God will bless him. For that reason we teach the law and urge men to do the will of God.

What is acceptable to God we call godliness, which means that it is something that is like God, that comes from God, that God encourages and that God will produce. Another word we have for this condition or character is righteousness. God seeks to promote righteousness, and we in Christian education would, be glad to promote righteousness. By righteousness we mean everything that goes with being right. We do not have to be too vague about that. A good many times people will say, "Well, who knows what's right?" Well, we can tell you what is right at this point, because it has been set forth in the Ten Commandments.

If you look at the Ten Commandments you will find at least four things. You will find that righteousness on the part of an individual includes reverence toward God. We find that in the early commandments. There is no question about that . . . reverence toward God is right in God's sight. Now, so far as any one human being is concerned, there will be around him at least three classes of people.

There will be one class of people that are above him by their very place in society and by the very function that they perform. Like the father and mother with a child, or like the government of the community in which you are, there will be those above, and the right thing toward those will be to show respect. Respect belongs to those who are in authority and who are in charge over you. There will be people that are on the same level as you are. They are people just like yourself. What is right in God's sight would be to show consideration for such people. Some people in the community where you live are not as well off as you are. They do not have what you have, and they are not as fortunate as you are. They are poor by comparison to yourself. There is a right attitude toward the poor. That is charity. These four attitudes, reverence toward God, respect toward those in authority, consideration for your fellow man who is your equal, and charity to those that are unfortunate, the poor, are expected of everybody.

Let me say it one time, but pay close attention. You do not have to be a Christian to be responsible for this. This is the nature of God. God expects this of everybody on the face of the earth. You will say it is not observed. I know it is not. Sin is that righteousness is not observed. But what is right is true for all men everywhere and not especially Christians. Certainly the Christian will aim at these things, but they are not especially what makes one a Christian. Actually, as we shall see, man will never in himself be able to achieve these things, but God will give something to him that will enable him to do it. This righteousness which I have described will not be obtained on the part of man, because of man's sin. This failing will be in some one form or another because of man's selfishness.

What we have been saying so far is that in God's dealing with man God expects righteousness from man. And right away we must understand too that man is not righteous because of sin. I can remind you that sin is in all men. "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." When we say that sin is in all men, we mean that every human being that you know is under the penalty of having done wrong in the sight of God. Eventually he will die. Even now he has guilt, a sense of impending doom. Any person who has any honesty or integrity at all knows that he is not what he ought to be. In the second place, man's sin holds him in bondage. There are people in various sorts of bondage. There is slavery to elements in the self. Sometimes our slavery is in the form of self indulgence, in the form of appetite. Sometimes the slavery is to ambition, and sometimes to vanity. Or, the slavery may be to imagination. This is a bondage that people are in because of their sinful disposition. There is also a weakness in them, and that weakness is in them because of repeated and continued failure. The Bible says with reference to all men this simple word, "There is none righteous, no not one." And still in Christian education we teach the law for all men. We know that they will sin. We know that they will fail. Yet we teach these things because they are true.

But that is not all we know. We would not go into this if we did not know more. We know and will teach the gospel. As Christians we will tell the world something that the world can never find out otherwise. We will tell something that "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man," . . . something that God has revealed by His Spirit. That is that "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." In other words, we are to make the very basic position of Christian education that Christ Jesus came into the world to seek and to save the lost. What the Lord Jesus Christ did in order to save the lost is set forth very vividly and dramatically before us at the cross of Calvary. He died for men to take away their guilt and to release them from the grip of sin in their lives. He was raised from the dead. This opens a new life. And we teach that you can actually live in the resurrection life of the Lord Jesus Christ. He sent forth His Holy Spirit at Pentecost, giving His Holy Spirit into the life of His

people to strengthen them by the grace of God; so that they will be inwardly moved to want to do the will of God, according to that which is revealed to them by His Holy Spirit. Christ Jesus at Calvary, and at the resurrection and at Pentecost took away guilt for believers, opened up a new life, and gave His Holy Spirit, that they might have peace, life and joy.

So in Christian education we teach the law. And we teach to all people that Almighty God, being as He is and who He is, expects all men everywhere to do His will, and all the world is guilty before God. But immediately we teach the gospel, and we urge that rest and peace is available to all those who will receive Him.

The Method of Christian Education

In our last study we were considering the meaning of Christian education. We defined Christian education as a program that is designed to win and to culture Christians. We noted that it is God that produces a Christian by the Word and by the Spirit. In other words, nobody gets to be a Christian on his own. You can look around over the world and you will find that people do not become Christians naturally. Christians do not just appear here, there and elsewhere. There's always a reason. The Scripture tells us, "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us." It would imply that God actually starts the business of bringing us to Him in Christ. Paul says in Romans, "God commendeth his love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." No one is born humanly as a Christian. You must be born again.

Christians occur only where the Bible, the Word of God, is known. In First Corinthians, Paul wrote, "It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." And of course the preaching is the preaching of the Word of God. Because this is true, that Christians occur only where the Bible is known and grow only where the Bible is taught, we seek to teach and to preach the Bible. That is the very reason for The Bible For You. And the name is exactly what we mean. We believe that the Bible is given of God into the world for human beings to understand, to know, so that they can believe it and come to Him.

Paul has expressed all this very clearly in the book of Romans in chapter ten, beginning at verse twelve: "For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent?" A few verses down you read, "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."

This brings us to our topic, "The Method of Christian Education." Christian education is the activity wherein we actually seek to win and to culture Christians.. Now we are going to ask how we shall carry on this activity. There is one idea that we will have all the way through - God's method of communicating the gospel is men, redeemed men. That's the way it can be done. Somebody gets to know the Lord, and that person can tell somebody else. Paul recognized this when he said, "I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase." We do recognize that God is the one who does it. That is the work of God. But it is true that Paul planted and Apollos watered. Then God gave the increase.

Now we can keep in mind that God's part of the work will remain inscrutable so far as we are concerned. We will never be able to figure out the ways of the Holy Spirit. We do not need to. God will do His part. We can depend upon Him. But the planting and the watering is done by men; and because it is done by men, it can be studied. It can be studied to find out the better ways of doing things. It should

be intelligently planned, because it is the work of man. And it should be diligently promoted. When I try to understand this truth I often think that it certainly is true that God makes the wheat grow. I am sure of that. If I look out over a field and I see wheat out there, I know that God makes the wheat grow. But it is not the least bit irreverent or unbelieving to keep in mind that there would be no wheat field at all if it were not for the farmer. That brings us in. I know that the farmer is secondary, and I know that he is dependent, but I am pointing out to you that when it comes to producing something like a crop in the fields, the farmer is necessary. And when it comes to such a thing as spreading the gospel, we have our part to perform.

With the task of evangelizing the whole world in mind, when our Lord Jesus Christ had finished what was necessary for the salvation of men in that He had died for men and had been raised from the dead, what was left now was to tell the whole world about it so that people could come to believe. Then He gave us the great commission. It is in Matthew 28:18-20: "Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth." And we rejoice in that. We know that the power belongs to God. But now listen: "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." Here we see that when the Lord Jesus has in one breath said, "All power is given unto me," He has added, "I want you to go. I am going with you, and I'll bless you, but I want you to go. I want you to do the things that you can do in the spreading of the gospel." All power is given unto the Lord, and therefore we are to go to teach the things that the Lord has taught us for them to know. When God communicated His Word into this world, when He made known His will perfectly, He sent His Son in the form of man. He did not send angels to bring the gospel. He sent His Son. The Lord Jesus told His disciples, "As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you." We are face to face with this amazing truth that He has entrusted the evangelization to redeemed men; such as we are.

When we are talking about the method of Christian education, how then shall we go about it if it is for us to do? What shall we do? I want you to have in mind when we talk about redeemed men who are used in spreading the gospel, we are referring not only to ministers, but we have in mind parents . . . friends . . . neighbors . . . brothers and sisters, wives, cousins, uncles, people that know each other. We get letters from many earnest people who tell us of burdens that they have that they want us to share. Many times the burden that a man or a woman writes to us is about some loved one that they want to come to the Lord. We are glad to share in praying. But let us have this in mind: you and I also have something to do in witnessing. There is something that we can do in the actual spreading of the gospel.

How shall redeemed men communicate the gospel? One word comes to mind - tell. We may tell. And in order to be able to tell, we need to know. So, of course, before you ever start telling you are going to have to do some studying. Redeemed men must have learned what it is that they are going to tell. There is an incident in Acts 3:6 when Peter said to the lame man, "Such as I have give I thee." Those very words are exactly the measure of our function in the telling business. What you do not know you cannot tell. And so, the more you and I know the more we can tell. If we are interested in helping other people to come to the Lord, we need to know about it more and more and more.

This is what Paul had in mind when he urged Timothy about these things in the First Epistle of Paul to Timothy. Study this through yourself in I Timothy 4:12: "Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believer, in words, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity. Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. Neglect not the gift that is in thee." All of that amounts to study, learn more and more about this. In verse fifteen he continued, "Meditate upon these

things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all." And then especially look at this: "Take heed unto thy self, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee." You and I can actually help other people that we are interested in and concerned about as we ourselves learn more about the gospel. This is one thing I hope that those of you who listen may keep in mind as we try to share with you the meaning of the gospel. We have in mind that the better you understand it, the better you'll be able to share it and the more clearly you can pray. In writing to Titus, Paul said that he wanted Titus to use sound speech that cannot be condemned. You see that's telling. It makes a difference how we talk and what we talk about. From time to time we should talk about things that pertain to the Lord. Paul said in his second letter to Timothy that he was to hold fast the form of sound words. Now the form of sound words would be the kind of language you find in the Bible, the kind of language that you find in the confession of faith, the creeds of the church, and the catechisms of the church. Hold fast the form of sound words, because that is going to be helpful to other people. Paul said about himself, I have not shunned to declare unto you all the council of God. I know there will be people who will tell us that the Christian gospel is spread by our example and our works. I would not minimize that at all. I realize that much of that can be true but there is a sense in which the gospel comes in words and the words must be spoken. Paul did not shun to declare all the council of God. He also told Timothy to study to show himself approved to God, a workman that needs not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. Now rightly dividing the word of truth, holding a straight course through the Scripture in the interpretation and the understanding of it, being intelligent and diligent about this whole matter, all of this is in the word *tegnos*. That is one way our commission is going to be performed - parents tell their children, older people tell younger people, Sunday School teachers tell their pupils, and preachers tell their congregations. There is a great deal of importance in this matter of telling the gospel. I know you have to back it up by your conduct, but it must be told.

The reason I am emphasizing that is because we are living in a time in our world when actually, as surprising as it may seem to you, there are people who seem to think that they can spread the gospel no matter what you say. They indicate that it does not make any difference what is taught or what kind of preaching goes on. It does not even make any difference whether you hear any preaching at all. Just so you go in with the group and do the things that they do, you will be all right. Do not be fooled by, that. You do need to share in the work, and you do need to participate in the activity, but you need to hear the Word and believe the Word. You need to tell the Word so that people can know and believe it; because that is the kind of faith that will help them. "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."

The second word I have in mind is - teach. In Nehemiah 8:8 we read concerning Ezra, who was a great teacher in the Old Testament, "So they read in the book of the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading." And if I could have any particular ambition on our program of The Bible For You, it is right here in this verse. I would like to read in the book of the Bible, the law of God, distinctly, so that people can understand the meaning what is being read. If you understand the Word of God, then you can believe the Word of God; and if you believe, you can have the blessing of God.

In this connection we would do well to note what we read in the book of Ezra at 7:10, "For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgment." We have right there a marvelous pattern. You actually have there the true preparation of a teacher. There are three aspects to it. He had prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord. That's the first thing. He made up his mind deep down in his heart that he would understand God's ways and practice them in

himself. And he would teach in Israel the statutes and judgments. In this connection in Malachi 2:6, 7 you see something very clearly put about the character of a priest. "The law of truth was in his mouth, and iniquity was not found in his lips: he walked with me in peace and equity, and did turn many away from iniquity. For the priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth: for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts." Isn't that remarkable? I want you to notice all the way through there was teaching, presenting the truth to the hearts and minds of people.

Now we can turn over to the New Testament in the book of Acts and take a look at the incident of Philip showing the gospel to the Ethiopian; because this is a classic instance of this very thing. Philip was certainly communicating the Christian gospel. In his preaching, people listened and heard and believed and came to know the Lord. Notice in chapter 8 beginning at verse 29. We read that "the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot. And Philip ran thither to him, heard him read the prophet Isaiah, and said, Understandest thou what thou readest? And he said, How can I, except some man should guide me?" Now here is a wonderful understanding of the work of the teacher. Here is a good man who has been worshipping God. He is on his way home, and he is reading the Bible. Philip is called by the Holy Spirit to go over to him. He rides along with him and asks a simple question, "Do you understand what you are reading?" The man gives such a penetratingly clear answer, "How can I, except someone show me?" Someone who knows, can tell. Who can show? You know how it is in anything. The woman who knows how to sew can show you how to handle a machine. The person who knows how to use a mixer in the kitchen can show you how to use it. The person who knows how to raise beans in the garden can show you how to do it.

Paul in his own way demonstrated the flexibility of procedure in communicating. You do not say the same to everybody. Paul would deal one way when he was talking to the pagans, who had no knowledge of the Scripture. He would argue from nature that God is benevolent. Then when he was dealing with learned, educated people, as on Mars Hill, those Greeks that were trained in philosophy, he argued from history and from human consciousness, and used literature to illustrate what he was saying. He taught that God is sovereign; and because He is, you can expect Him to judge all men. That's the way Paul would argue with them. But when he was dealing with the Jews, who knew the Old Testament Scriptures, Paul would argue from Scripture that God by means of the resurrection will save persons through the Messiah. And he tells them that they could have recognized the Messiah in Jesus Christ.

Undoubtedly it is a useful technique in dealing with people, when you're teaching, to invite them to participate by asking them leading questions. But a teacher is a guide who knows and can be followed with confidence. So in thinking of the method of Christian education, we are to tell and to teach.

A third aspect is to preach. Here again we should observe Paul in the Acts. We see in Acts 14:1 where he "so spake, that a great multitude . . . believed." His preaching was conducive to producing belief. Later in 17:4 we are told that Paul's manner was to reason "out of the Scriptures." We can take the Bible and let it form our ideas and thoughts and then guide others in preaching God's Word. The Bible gives authority to our message. In all of this, Paul's attitude was one of humility - the message and authority were God's, not his own. And, his desire was to serve others in calling them to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. But he spoke with conviction and power and authority that were given him in his awareness that the truths of Scripture are real and valid and that men need to believe and to grow. In the same way we must call men to believe as we tell and teach them the gospel.

The Message of Christian Education

Today I want to talk to you about the message of Christian education. You really want to win some other person to be a Christian. And you understand that it is your responsibility, because you yourself are a believer. What is it that you will tell when you are trying to show other people the truth about becoming a Christian? Mind you, what makes them a Christian is what they believe, the way in which they believe. I know there has to be activity and being a Christian will make a difference in one's life, but those things follow. It is according to what you believe in your heart about the Lord Jesus Christ. This is what becomes operative in you and results in everything that you speak about as Christian faith and life.

This whole program of Christian education, the whole business of parents trying to get their children to believe, friends trying to get other friends to believe, your trying to get people to come to church, this whole program of Christian education is valid because man needs help. And, God can and will help man, and we know it. In Christian Education the aim is to bring this help from God into the life of man who needs the help from God. When God helps a man we call it blessing. The gospel offers the blessing of God to "whosoever will." Many of us will remember that easily - the blessing of God is offered to whosoever will.

There are two legitimate ways to get anything. One way is to earn it by your own efforts. The other is to receive it as a gift. Either way you can really have it. You can earn it and pay for it, or you can receive it as a gift and you don't have to pay for it at all. It is yours in either case. The Bible reveals that the blessing of God that we have through Christ Jesus (which we call Christian life and experience) is never achieved by working for it. But it can be received by believing and by receiving. There are classic examples in Scripture, and I'll draw your attention to two way back in Old Testament times. The people at the tower of Babel in the eleventh chapter of Genesis and Abraham in Genesis twelve. In the book of Genesis you have the contrast between these two. When you read that short story in the eleventh chapter of Genesis About the tower of Babel you will see that those human beings undertook by works to receive blessing from God. When you read the story of Abraham beginning in Chapter twelve you will find that Abraham walked with God by faith. The difference between the men of Babel and Abraham was not what they wanted. They both wanted the same thing. They both wanted to be secure. They both wanted to be satisfied. In other words, they both wanted to be blessed. But, the men of Babel undertook to work for it, while Abraham looked to God for it and depended upon God. The Bible tells us that the two principles illustrated here are law on the part of the men of Babel and grace on the part of Abraham. The Christian gospel emphasizes that the free gift of God is eternal life. You will get everything there is in salvation from God free as a gift when it is offered to you and given to you. Thus we see that in our whole message of Christian education we have these two principles, the law and grace. The law comes first and grace follows afterwards, just like the law came by Moses but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.

The law of God is valid. Paul calls it holy, just and good. There is nothing wrong with it. The only thing that you and I need to remember right at the outset and all the way through is it won't work. The reason it won't work is because we won't work it. You might say, "Well, why do you teach it to the children if you know that they can't do it?" One of the reasons we do it is that one of the functions of the law is to give knowledge of sin. Unless we taught them the law, they would never know what God requires. Until they really know what God requires they won't see how they fail. Unless they see how they fail, they won't recognize the need of a Savior, and if they don't feel the need of a Savior, they won't receive the Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord Jesus Christ is not something that you add onto your own life.

He is not something nice that you put on on Sunday, like a special suit of clothes, after you have been the kind of person you are all week long. No, what we have in the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ is a substitute. He offers a totally new life to you in exchange for your natural life. You were born a human being, and you are who you are in yourself naturally. Now you are going to have to be willing to give up yourself in order to receive the things of the Lord Jesus Christ. The only way that you will be willing to give yourself up is if you see that you are wrong and under condemnation. This the law will help you see. You actually are a sinner in the sight of God and you are doomed before Him.

Now God is unchangeable in His own nature and He is the author of the law of God. The law of God requires all men to do what is right in the sight of God. That is true for anybody, anywhere, anytime. It is true for the Eskimo in the Arctic Circle and for the native in the South Sea Islands. God made man in such a way that man should do what is right in God's sight.

Right in God's sight is not so much a matter of outward conduct. It isn't described anywhere in the Bible in a single stereotype way, so that if you act in a certain way or dress in a certain way or go through certain motions, that's going to make you right. Right is never a matter of rigid fixation. You can not just force it here, there and everywhere and say that's the right thing. The form of conduct actually is largely defined in the situation where it occurs. If you really do the will of God, in one place you'll do like this, in another place you'll do like that. That isn't going to interfere with the moral and ethical matters, but in many of the affairs of our lives the actual variation from one country to another is noticeable but does not make any difference to the heart, so far as the heart is concerned. Right is not a matter then of external conformity. It is not something that looks like something that somebody has described, and anybody like that is right. That is not the point. It is a matter of obedience to God's will. I am right in God's sight when I do what He wants me to do, whatever that may be. I am quite sure that is going to be moral, righteous and good. It may not be the same as somebody else does somewhere else. I may do one way in China, another way in Persia, another way in New York and another way in Kansas. There will not be any difference about such things as stealing, and killing, but there will be a lot of differences in social conduct and affairs in different parts of the country. But right in God's sight is to be obedient to Him.

It is a good deal like a ship at sea. The boat rolls from side to side, but it doesn't change its course. So it is with reference to the Christian. He may roll this way and that way according to the way the waves roll and the wind blows, but he is being guided by a compass. He's not going by the waves. He is not going some way because it fills good to him. He is going according to the way he is led.

God encourages men to do right by promising them rewards. If we keep His law and do His will, we will receive blessing from Him. The principle of the law, "whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap," may seem quite proper. And it is. It is holy, just and good. But as I have told you already, it is useless to us because it won't provide us blessing. It is invalidated and frustrated by sin and by sinfulness. Now we teach the law. We teach the Ten Commandments. We teach that men should know what God wants of them, and we teach what God requires of man. That is in order for man to learn what God would have and to see how he has failed to meet the requirements. We teach all this so that man may be led to repentance. When man is a repentant soul, then God can deal with him.

In considering the message of Christian education we must turn quickly from the law to the gospel of God. Here we may clearly see the distinctive Christian part. Right here we must ask some basic questions. If a man should sin, is he forever doomed? The gospel would say no. If a man would sin, should this be ignored? No, it should not be ignored. If a man sins and he is guilty, what then? And here is the wonderful truth. He can be forgiven because the Bible tells us the "Son of man is come to seek and

to save that which was lost." The truth of the matter is that. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." This means that God Himself will do whatever is needed for our salvation in, by and through Jesus Christ. He did send His Son into the world to bring to pass our deliverance. Christ Jesus achieved in His life the perfect fulfillment of the law and now He is willing to share His obedience with us by the Holy Spirit. By faith, because we respond to the Word of God, man can enter into eternal life which is provided by Christ Jesus. This gospel of God is set before us by the promises of God and men are called to come unto the Lord and be saved. No matter what various ways we explain it, this is going to be the gist of the whole message of Christian education: come to the Lord Jesus Christ and you'll be saved.

Now all the other things are true because the truth of the matter is the soul that receives Jesus Christ is brought into salvation. And mind you, you mean that that soul that receives Jesus Christ will be inwardly led to willing obedience. He will actually be doing the things of God. He will be inwardly led to the death of his human nature and of self. He will be inwardly raised by Almighty God. Where once he was given over to the things of the flesh, he will find himself sensitive to the things of the Spirit. He will be regenerated by the Holy Spirit of God, and beginning as a babe, you will find that he will grow in grace and in knowledge toward Almighty God. This person who believes in the Lord Jesus Christ will find that the living lord Jesus Christ will intercede for him. It's a marvelous thing to know as you live that you are not alone; there is someone praying for you. This is actually in the plan of God, and this soul will be united with Christ forever and ever.

And so sinful man, who has been made aware of his plight by the law of God and who in himself feels totally undone, will hear from us the message of the gospel that God will save him. Just think of what we have to say in the message of Christian education. No matter to whom it is presented, whether to little children, to young people, to middle age folks or to old people, here is what you will promise to them absolutely: the promise of salvation by grace. God is able to do it. "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." There is no limitation at all. You know that God is righteous and holy. You admit that man is a sinner and that you have sinned yourself. Still you know you can come in confidence because God has called you and Jesus Christ died for your sins; so that you can come into the presence of God, completely free from guilt and sin.

When we're teaching, we will teach that if a person receives the Lord Jesus Christ as his Savior, he will be born again of God. He will have a new creature of the Lord Jesus Christ in Him. The old man will be there, but there'll be a new man in Christ Jesus. Something new, eternal, everlasting will be started in him. This new nature is sensitive to God. Now the old nature is sensitive to the flesh. In the old nature, I am interested in what I hear, see, smell, taste and touch. In the old nature I am interested in the things I like and the things that look good, but in the new nature I am moved to willing obedience to God. I find my greatest joy in fellowship with Almighty God. I belong to Him - every moment, every hour, throughout the whole day and every day in the week, and every week in the month and every month in the year. Because I belong to Him, I am inwardly moved to obey Him. I want to do His will. I am not obeying Him in order to get right. I am not obeying Him in order that He will look on me with favor. I belong to Him. He belongs to me. And the grace of God in my heart will move me to willing obedience to God.

This will include the denial of self. In our Christian education we need to teach that when we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit of God is working in us He will lead us to deny self. If we find ourselves getting interested in things because they feel good, if they are not right in the sight of God, this new nature guided by the Holy Spirit will be led to deny that. Suppose I am facing something I really

would like? Why do I like it? It appeals to me. What part of me does it appeal to? It appeals to the way I feel. It appeals to the way I think. It appeals to the way I want to be somebody. As I believe in the lord Jesus Christ, I will find that I am inwardly led of God to deny myself, and on that specific thing that I am looking at, I'll reckon myself dead, I just won't take any part in it.

The message of Christian education for every one of us is that when Jesus Christ is in us we will be strengthened to be silently submissive so far as this world is concerned. There will be so much in this world we cannot control. Many times there will be people who conduct themselves in a way that is actually obnoxious to us and the things that they do make us feel bad, but we will be silently submissive to them. We will take everything as from God. If you get the whole message of Christian education, we will tell you to trust the Lord about everything that happens to you. Put your confidence and trust in Him. This will lead you to the crucifixion of the flesh. And you'll find that you may have to reckon yourself indeed as if there wasn't anything of you. Then I can promise you there will be resurrection by the power of God. The new nature in you, will become strong. God's blessing will be upon you and will help you. You will find that the days go by, and you can count upon Him. He will actually appreciate what you are doing in the fact that you want to do His will. You will have the power of God lifting you. And you will be indwelt by the Holy Spirit. We would bring to everybody as we teach that, as you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, God Himself will send the Holy Spirit into your heart to live in you and draw you nearer to Him. And this will result in your becoming fruitful to the glory of God.

Now every one of these things that I have talked about, as desirable as they are, are not things you work for. They are not things you go out and try to bring to pass. They are things that you receive when you believe in the lord Jesus Christ and trust yourself to Him. You will receive salvation by the grace of God. God's goodness will be for you. You will be inwardly changed and regenerated and born again by the grace of God. You'll be moved from within to a willing obedience to the Father. You will want to be well-pleasing in His sight. You will be led to deny yourself. You will be strengthened to be silently submissive in any situation that you are in. You'll trust the Providence of God, and you will know that God would not let it happen to you if it had been good, to avoid it. You will personally undertake to see that you deny yourself so that the only way to describe it is that you are crucified with Christ. And you'll receive the resurrection by the power of God, being indwelt by His Holy Spirit and moved to be fruitful to the glory of God. I have reviewed for you what God will do for you in Christ Jesus, and this is our message in Christian education. Everything from the Lord is free. God wants you to have it. This is the way we must teach God's salvation and all that is a part of it - turn to Christ and receive it, do not try to work for it.

The Teacher In Christian Education

We are interested in having other people also believe as we believe in order that they too might share in the blessing that is ours by faith in Christ Jesus. This is the normal, natural thing for Christians. When we are thinking about Christian education we nearly always think in terms of what goes on in church, in the home and in the school - what we do together as a group of people. Now really, basically, what makes a person a Christian is his faith. It is what he understands and believes. But, in order to believe, someone must tell them. Always it is true that somebody must go and tell. There are Christians in Africa and there are Christians in Asia. I wouldn't have to argue with you to tell you there wouldn't be a single Christian there if somebody hadn't gone. That person who went, went as a teacher.

You have children growing up in your home, and I am sure that you expect that they will be

Christians. Well, I can tell you right now they won't be Christians unless you teach them the things of the Lord. I think sometimes many of us are making a very grave mistake. We think just because we believe and do trust in the Lord Jesus for our salvation, then anybody born in, our family will have the same faith. It is not quite like that. It is going to be necessary to tell them and to show them. This can be done in various ways. I appreciate the fact that there is much that can be done without using words or language. But there's no reason why you should not use words. We've got tongues. We can talk; and even if you can't talk to everybody, you can talk to some people. This puts us in the place of the teacher, and today I want to talk with you about the teacher in Christian education.

The whole field of education is constantly being analyzed. Those making these studies present different ideas as to how learning takes place. According to the way they think of learning, that's the way they think about the teacher. Now the central figure in any educational program is the teacher, no matter where you find him. If the teacher is a parent and you have a child growing up to teach, it will be important how the parent teaches. If you have a school teacher, a Sunday School teacher, a pastor or a personal worker, he is the representative who shares the message with other people and tells them, and he is the central person.

Because of the way learning normally is promoted, sometimes we use the word education to indicate the work of the teacher, and sometimes we use the word instruction. When we use the word education, we are thinking about the child being led along in the way of learning. The teacher is seen more as a guide. As an instructor, the teacher would communicate certain information. There are certain things to know. The teacher knows what these are. The pupil does not know; and as long as the pupil does not know and the teacher knows, the teacher can instruct in those things. As a guide, the teacher would lead the pupil into experiences of learning. Some years ago American school education was almost overrun with the idea that pupils were to follow their own interest in what they learned. Those were the days of what we called child-centered education. There are some of us who had children growing up in those days, and we shudder when we think of it, even now. In those days it was common for people to make a big thing of saying that they were teaching the child and they were not teaching a subject. That sounded so good, but after a few years of that, when sometimes the child didn't know anything, then it became obvious that the teacher should have to teach the child something. So, we learned to say that we were teaching the subject to the child. And that's the way in which we largely left it.

Recently this theory of education, that somehow children can learn without anybody teaching them, has appeared again in our field of Christian education, strange as it may seem - and especially among adults. In the past few years it has been popular in some circles of the church to try to dispense with the teacher altogether. Usually this has come under the guise of doing away with the lecture method, and some proponents would make you think that a lecture is something bad. Of course, that's what the Lord Jesus did for the Sermon on the Mount, and that's what Paul did when he stood and talked anywhere. The procedure has been visualized that if you were to learn anything there would be something like a group research. A number of people would get together to talk something over, and it would lead into group discussion. You would have to have somebody to act as moderator or chairman. What was once called the teacher was to be called the resource authority, somebody that would be called on very much in the way in which you used to go to the encyclopedia to get any information that you didn't know. So you would have somebody around you could ask for specific information, if you wanted it. It was supposed that out of this discussion things would be learned better than they were formerly learned when teachers presented the material in a lesson plan.

Now I am not going to discuss the merits and demerits of the various ways of teaching. If you have a

good teacher, it works. If you do not have a good teacher, it does not work. That's about the way it is. If you had a teacher that knew anything, you would have a teacher that might teach something, but if you had a teacher that didn't know anything, that person couldn't learn to teach anything. The principle that will govern the whole teaching business is "such as I have give I thee." Undoubtedly, any successful teacher has always used discussion at some stage in his presentation, some more effectively than others. The teacher might even put on an act before you when he would be discussing in front of you and you would listen and enter in in that way. But the thing I have been referring to which has been going on in recent years is definitely something different. This is a matter of trying to get rid of the idea that the teacher will come to teach anything at all. It is serious, because in getting rid of the teacher, they sometimes actually get rid of the message. You know, in order to discuss you have to know what you're talking about. That makes a big presumption. If you are going to have discussion, your group members need to know the Bible to be taught the Bible, to study thoroughly and carefully before beginning to discuss. Otherwise we may merely discuss what we as human beings think rather than what God has given us for our instruction and blessing. The significance of the teacher as a leader is seen in many illustrations about us. If you were going to go touring through a strange city on your own you would see something. But wouldn't you see a lot more if you had a good guide? Suppose you were going through the government buildings in a certain capital city? Would you not see more if you had a guide? If you went through a museum altogether on your own you would see something. But wouldn't you see more in less time and more effectively if you had a guide to go along and interpret it for you and show you about these things? Of course you would. Mind you, you might want to go back later to look at something more closely, but even then it would be good to have help from someone who has been there before. Take a choir. A choir is made up of a group of people who are singing. Can you imagine what a choir would be like if you didn't have a director? What does the director do? He gets them to come together and to do it in a certain way. A band is made up of a number of instruments. You have flutes, trombones, saxophones, drums, all that sort of thing. What do you think a band would be like if you didn't have a bandmaster? Well that's what a group of children are like if you don't have a teacher. It's pretty much that way if you have a group of people together in discussion when you don't have somebody guiding this discussion and leading it. If you were going to build a building, what would it be like if you started out and put a lot of money into a great building if you didn't have an architect? In an operating room you have nurses, attendants and doctors, and you have a patient in for operation. Isn't it important to have the surgeon to be in charge? Can you picture a ship going out to sea with the whole crew of several hundred men without a captain? You wouldn't think of such a thing. Now it's like that in learning. Certainly you could learn something on your own, and any number of times people do start out on their own. I wonder when you think about wanting to learn everything brand new as if nobody had ever been there before, do you realize if everybody did that that you would be just one generation away from savagery without someone to teach you these things?

Let us recall we are thinking about winning and culturing Christians. And what is a Christian? A Christian is what he is because of his faith in Jesus Christ. Faith as a psychological exercise is like swallowing. A person can swallow anything. You can swallow food or you can swallow poison. If you swallow food, you'll live. If you swallow poison, you'll die. Faith is like that. You can believe the truth and that will bring blessing or you can believe error that will hurt you. Business is conducted by mutual trust; but when you trust a man that is a deceiver, a liar or a crook, he'll cheat you. Trusting him won't make him honest. Trust will tie you up with him. If he is honest, that will be all right; but if he is not honest, you are foolish when you trust him. In order for you to have food that's really safe you need a

good, responsible cook. For a safe enjoyable trip you need a person who really knows where he is going.

If you will recall the message of Christian education, you will remember we talked about certain essentials. Someone needs to set out those essentials to be learned, and that person is the teacher. Someone needs to set these out 'as true so that other people can receive them. This is best done when the teacher believes them to be true and sets them out in that way. The gospel truth is that Jesus Christ came to seek and to save the lost. He came exactly on account of sinners. All in the world have sinned and come short of the glory of God. There is none righteous, no not one. Christ Jesus in His own body bore the sins of the whole world and made it possible for men to be saved. This truth of Calvary needs to be taught - that Christ Jesus died for us. The truth of the resurrection is that He was raised from the dead, and because He was raised from the dead, we can be raised from the dead. And the truth of Pentecost that God sent His Holy Spirit into this world to dwell in the hearts of believers is something that needs to be taught. Any teacher must present these things. He will present the truth of the law of God. He will show that the requirement of the law of God leaves you guilty because of the wrong you have done. And the truth of the gospel promises you peace through deliverance. Then, the Holy Spirit makes the law of God operative in the believer as a new creation in Christ.

I need to say something to you further about the teacher and the things that you should expect, because any of us would be glad to know the things that we should do. We have these truths of the gospel in mind. How can we share them with other people? The first thing I want to discuss is the function of the teacher, whether he is in Sunday School, in the home, or wherever you find the teacher. The teacher acts as a substitute for the parents. The teacher also can be understood as the delegated representative of the church. All the Christian people are represented in that one person who is doing the talking. If you are talking to some soul about the Lord and you are telling him about Christ Jesus who will save, you are the representative of the whole church when you are doing that. In addition, the teacher in a certain sense is the custodian, the keeper of approved values in living. In all of these he is the tutor of the learning processes. People are coming to know and to understand. They'll have to learn. I remember my becoming a Christian was a long process. I don't see how I would ever have come through if an old farmer hadn't patiently taught me. He went over and over again and led me from point to point in my understanding.

Next, we have to consider the character of a teacher. If you would like to be a teacher, I have three things to say. In the first place, the teacher should be kind. There should be kindness. There should be love shown. There should be cheerfulness in dealing with people and meekness in the way in which you treat them. The second thing I want to say about a person who would try to help other people is, he must be consistent. We cannot vacillate back and forth. It won't help one day to be like this and the other day like that. There must be a steadiness about us. And so far as a teacher is concerned, especially in Sunday School or church, we must be willing to be prompt. We must be regular. We must be orderly in the way in which we do things, if we want to help other people. So this second big thing is consistency. The third thing in the character of a teacher that I would impress upon your mind is that we must have personal concern about that other person. We must show our attention to them in their circumstances and we must care about what's happening to them. We really need to be sympathetic with these people we are trying to help.

Finally, let me again draw your attention to the fact that the influence we have upon other people as teachers is very real. I know that a very real thing happens in our personal conduct with other people. That works in every way. Just as a Christian influences people toward God, so a non-Christian influences people away from God. For instance, a Christian teacher in his own personal reverence

influences other people to be reverent. In his own consideration of other people he influences other people to be considerate of other people. In his own attitude and performance of prayer he sets an example in the matter of prayer. In his own way of keeping the Sabbath he affects other people in Sabbath observance. In his own giving to God and in his generosity and liberality he affects other people in this way. In his own praise and share in singing and worship, he influences other people. In his Bible reading and Bible study he witnesses to other people. Certainly so far as the spreading of the Christian gospel is concerned, a great deal depends upon the teacher, the Christian who is the witness for the Lord Jesus Christ.