

THE SERMONS OF JOHN WESLEY SERIES
SERMON 1: SCRIPTURAL CHRISTIANITY
Acts 4:31

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. . .⁴ someone who hears the sound of the horn but does not take warning, and a sword comes and takes him away, his blood will be on his *own* head (Ezekiel 33:4, NASB).

³¹ And when they had prayed, the place where they had gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and *began* to speak the word of God with boldness (Acts 4:31, NASB).

“...And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit...” The same expression occurs in the second chapter of Acts, where we read:

¹ When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all [*the Apostles, with the women, and the mother of Jesus, and his brothers,*] together in one place. ² And suddenly a noise like a violent rushing wind came from heaven, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. ³ And tongues *that looked* like fire appeared to them, distributing themselves, and *a tongue* rested on each one of them. ⁴ And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit. [*One immediate effect of this was that they*] began to speak with different tongues, as the Spirit was giving them *the ability* to speak out, [inasmuch, that both the Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and the other strangers who] came together were bewildered, because each one of them was hearing them speak in his own language (Acts 2:1-6, NASB).

In Acts chapter four we read that when the Apostles and the others gathered with them had been praying and praising God, the place where they were assembled was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit. Now, there was no visible appearance at this time as there had been in the earlier instance, nor are we told that the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Spirit were then given to all or any of them; such as the gifts of healing, of miracle-working, of prophecy, of the discerning of spirits, of speaking in diverse tongues, or the interpretation of tongues (1 Corinthians 12:9-10).

Whether these gifts of the Holy Spirit were designed to remain in the Church throughout all ages, and whether or not they will be restored at the nearer approach of the “restitution of all things,” are questions which we do not need to decide. But we should observe that, even in the infancy of the Church, God divided these gifts with a sparing hand. Were all even then Prophets? Were all workers of miracles? Did all have gifts of healing? Did all speak in tongues? No, perhaps not one in a thousand. Probably none but the Teachers in the Church, and only some of them (1

Corinthians 12:28-30). It was, therefore, for a more excellent purpose than this that “they were all filled with the Holy Spirit.”

It was to give them (what no one can deny to be essential to all Christians in all ages) the mind which was in Christ—those holy fruits of the Spirit which whoever does not have them does not belong to Christ; to fill them with “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,²³ gentleness, and self-control;” (Galatians 5:22-23, NASB); to endow them with faith (perhaps a better word would be fidelity) with meekness and the moderation of their appetites; to enable them to crucify the flesh, with its affections and lusts, its passions and desires; and, as a result of that inward change, to fulfill all outward righteousness; to “walk as Christ also walked,” in the “work of faith and labor of love and perseverance of hope” (1 Thessalonians 1:3, NASB).

Without concerning ourselves, then, in idle curiosity about those extraordinary gifts of the Spirit, let us take a closer look at the Spirit’s *ordinary* fruits, which we are assured will remain throughout all ages;—at that great work of God among the children of humanity, which we express with one word, Christianity; not as it applies to a set of opinions or a system of doctrines, but as it refers to human hearts and lives. It may be helpful to consider Christianity from three perspectives:

1. As beginning to exist in individuals.
2. As spreading from one person to another:
3. And as covering the earth.

Having discussed these, I intend to conclude with a plain, practical application.

First, let us consider Christianity in its rise, as beginning to exist in individuals.

Imagine, then, that one of those who heard the Apostle Peter’s sermon on the day of Pentecost in which he preached repentance and remission of sins was convicted in his heart, was convinced of his sin, repented, and then believed in Jesus. By this faith in the work of God which “is *the* certainty of *things* hoped for, a proof of things not seen (Hebrews 11:1, NASB), he instantly received the Spirit of Adoption, by which he now cried “Abba, Father” (Romans 8:15).

Now by the Holy Spirit, he could call Jesus Lord, the Spirit Himself bearing witness with his spirit that he was a child of God (Romans 8:16). Now he could truly say, “²⁰ I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me (Galatians 2:20, NASB).

This, then, would have been the very essence of his faith, a divine evidence or conviction of the love of God the Father, through the Son of His love, to him, a sinner, now accepted in Jesus. And, “having been justified by faith, [he now would have] peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,” (Romans 5:1, NASB). Even more, “the peace of God would rule in his heart;” a peace,

which, beyond all understanding, would keep his heart and mind from all doubt and fear, through the knowledge of the One in Whom he had then come to believe.

He could not, therefore, “be afraid of any evil news;” for his “heart would stand fast, believing in the Lord.” He would not fear what any other human could do to him, because he would know that the very hairs of his head were numbered. He would not fear the powers of darkness, whom God would be daily crushing under his feet. Even more, the fear of death would become the least of all of his fears. Instead, he would confess with the Apostle Paul that now he had “the desire to depart and be with Christ, for *that* is very much better;” (Philippians 1:23, NASB). For, “¹⁴ ... since the children share in flesh and blood, [Jesus] Himself likewise also partook of the same, so that through death He might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, ¹⁵ and free those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives” (Hebrews 2:14-15, NASB).

This one’s soul, therefore, would magnify the Lord, and his spirit would rejoice in God, his Savior. He would have rejoiced in Jesus with unspeakable joy, for Jesus had reconciled him to God and “⁷ In [Jesus] [he would have] redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of [his] wrongdoings, according to the riches of His grace which He lavished on us” (Ephesians 1:7-8, NASB). He would have rejoiced in the witness of God’s Spirit with his spirit that he was a child of God; and more abundantly, “in hope of the glory of God:” in hope of the glorious image of God, and full renewal of his soul in righteousness and true holiness; and in hope of that crown of glory, that “inheritance *which is imperishable, undefiled, and will not fade away,...*” (1 Peter 1:4, NASB).

“The love of God [would also have been] poured out within [his] heart through the Holy Spirit who was given to us” (Romans 5:5, NASB). “⁶ Because [he was now a son], God would have sent the Spirit of His Son into [his] heart, crying out, “Abba! Father!” (Galatians 4:6, NASB). And that parental love of God would have been continually increased by the witness that he had in himself of God’s pardoning love to him; by “¹ [seeing] how great a love the Father has given [him], that [he] would be called [a child] of God;...” (1 John 3:1, NASB). God would have become the desire of his eyes and the joy of his heart; his inheritance both in time and in eternity.

And one that loved God in these ways could not help but love his brothers and sisters; and “...not love with word or with tongue [only], but in deed and truth” (1 John 3:18, NASB). “If God so loved us,” he would have said, “we also ought to love one another” (1 John 4:11, NASB); yes, we must love every single person, for, “⁹ The LORD is good to all, and His mercies are over all His works” (Psalm 145:9, NASB).

In agreement with these things, this lover of God would have embraced all of humankind for God’s sake; not ignoring those he had never met personally, or those of whom he knew nothing more than that they were “the offspring of God,” for whom His Son had died; not ignoring the “evil” and the “ungrateful,” and not ignoring even his enemies—those who hated or persecuted or spitefully used him. All of these he would have embraced for his Master’s sake. Each of these would have had a special place, both in his heart and in his prayers. He would have loved them “even as Christ loved us.”

And “love does not brag, [and] it is not arrogant” (1 Corinthians 13:4, NASB). Love brings the knees of all those in whom it dwells into the dust. Similarly, this man would have been lowly of heart, little, mean, and vile in his own eyes. He would neither have sought nor received the praise of people, but only that which comes from God. He would have been meek and longsuffering, gentle to all, and easy to ask favors of.

Faithfulness and truth would never be far from him; these things would be “[bound] around [his] neck, and [written] on the tablet of [his] heart” (Proverbs 3:3, NASB). By the same Spirit he would be enabled to be temperate in all things, controlling himself as though he had been weaned from excess as a child is weaned from milk. He would have confessed with the Apostle Paul, “...the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world” (Galatians 6:14, NASB); now living beyond, “the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life,...” (1 John 2:16, NASB). By the same almighty love he would have been saved both from passion and from pride; both from lust and from vanity; both from ambition and from covetousness; and from every state of heart and mind that was not in Christ Jesus.

Of course, a person who had this love in his heart would work no evil against his neighbor. It would have been impossible for him, purposefully and intentionally, to do harm to any person. He would have been at the greatest distance from cruelty and wrong, from any unjust or unkind action. With the same care he would have “³ set a guard over [his] mouth; and kept watch over the door of [his] lips,” (Psalm 141:3, NASB) lest he should offend by his speech either against justice or against mercy or truth. He would have put away all lying, falsehood, and fraud; neither would deception be found in his mouth. He would have spoken evil of no person; nor would an unkind word ever have come out of his lips.

And as he would have been deeply aware of the truth of Jesus’ teaching, “...apart from Me you can do nothing,” (John 15:5, NASB) and, consequently, of his own need to be watered by God daily, so he would have continued daily in all the ordinances of God, which are the stated channels of God’s grace to humanity: Namely, “the Apostles’ teaching,” receiving eagerly that food of the soul; in “the breaking of bread,” which he would have found in the communion of the body of Christ; and “in the prayers” and praises offered up by the great congregation. And, in these ways, he would daily have “grown in grace,” increasing in strength, in the knowledge and love of God.

But it would not have satisfied him simply to abstain from doing evil. His soul would have been eager to do good. The language of his heart would have been continually, “ ‘My Father is working until now, and I Myself am working’ (John 5:17, NASB). My Lord went about doing good; and I will follow His example.”

As he had opportunity, therefore, if he could do no good of a higher kind, he would have fed the hungry, clothed the naked, helped the fatherless or stranger, visited and assisted them that were sick or in prison. He would have given all his goods to feed the poor. He would have rejoiced to work or to suffer for them; and in whatever way he might have benefited another

person, in those cases especially he would have denied himself. He would have thought of nothing as too dear to part with for them. He would have remembered the word of his Lord, Who said, "Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did *it* for one of the least of these brothers *or sisters* of Mine, you did *it* for Me" (Matthew 25:40, NASB).

This was Christianity in the beginning. Such was a Christian in ancient days. Such was every one of those who, when they heard the threats of the Chief Priests and Elders, "...were all filled with the Holy Spirit and *began* to speak the word of God with boldness. ³² And the congregation of those who believed were of one heart and soul;..." (Acts 4:31-32, NASB).

In this way the love of Him in Whom they had believed constrained them to love one another! "And not one *of them* claimed that anything belonging to him was his own, but all things were common property to them" (Acts 4:32, NASB). So fully were they crucified to the world, and the world crucified to them! "³³ And with great power the apostles were giving testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and abundant grace was upon them all. ³⁴ For there was not a needy person among them, for all who were owners of land or houses would sell them and bring the proceeds of the sales ³⁵ and lay *them* at the apostles' feet, and they would be distributed to each to the extent that any had need" (Acts 4:33-35, NASB).

Having considered Christianity in its rise, as beginning to exist in individuals, now, secondly, let us consider Christianity in its spread from person to person, and so gradually making its way into the world: For this was God's will for it, Who did not "light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lampstand, [that it might give] light to all who are in the house" (Matthew 5:15, NASB). Jesus Himself had declared this to His first disciples by teaching, "¹³You are the salt of the earth," and "the light of the world" (Matthew 5:13a, 14a, NASB). And, at the same time He gave them the general command, "¹⁶Your light must shine before people in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 5:16, NASB).

And, so, let's suppose that a few of these people who were committed to loving humankind the way Jesus instructed them saw "that the whole world lies in *the power of* the evil one" (1 John 5:19, NASB). Can we believe that they would be unconcerned at the misery of those for whom their Lord died? Wouldn't their compassion and mercy overwhelm them? And even if Jesus gave them no command, could they really stand by idly? Instead, would they not work by all possible means to pluck some of these brands out of the burning? Of course, they would. They would endure whatever must be endured to bring back whoever they could of those poor "straying sheep to the Shepherd and Guardian of their souls" (1 Peter 2:25, NASB).

The Christians of old did just this. They worked, "as they had opportunity to do good to all people," (Galatians 6:10, NASB) warning them to flee from the wrath to come; now, now to escape the damnation of final judgment. They declared, "³⁰ So having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now proclaiming to humankind that all people everywhere are to repent" (Acts 17:30, NASB). They cried out, "Turn, turn from your evil ways; 'so that wrongdoing does not become a stumbling block to you' " (Ezekiel 18:30, NASB). They "reasoned" with them of "righteousness," or justice,—of the virtues opposed to their reigning sins; "of self-control, and

the judgment to come,” (Acts 24:25, NASB)—of the wrath of God which will surely be executed on evil-doers on that day when He will judge the world.

In these ways they endeavored to speak to every person individually according to that person’s need. To the careless, to those who lay unconcerned in darkness and in the shadow of death, they thundered, “Awake, sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you” (Ephesians 5:14, NASB).

To those who were already awakened from sleep and groaning under a sense of the wrath of God, their language was, “We have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; ² and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins” (1 John 2:1b-2, NASB).

Meanwhile, they provoked those who had believed to love and to good works; to patient endurance in doing good; and to abound more and more in that “holiness without which no one will see the Lord” (Hebrews 12:14, NASB).

And their labor in the Lord was not in vain. His word ran and was glorified. It grew mightily and prevailed. But so much more did offenses also prevail. The world in general was offended, “because [they] testified about it, that its deeds were evil” (John 7:7, NASB).

Pleasure-seeking people were offended, not only because these people were made, as it were, to reprimand their thoughts, but much more, because so many of their companions were taken away and would no longer “run with *them* in the same excesses of debauchery” (1 Peter 4:4, NASB).

People of high office and high esteem were offended, because, as the Gospel spread, they declined in the esteem of the people; and because many no longer dared to give them flattering titles or to give them the respect due only to God. Salespeople and retailers called one another together, and said, “Men, you know that our prosperity depends upon this business. ²⁶ You see and hear that [these men have] persuaded and turned away a considerable number of people [so] that this trade of ours will fall into disrepute” (Acts 19:25-27, NASB).

Above all, religious people were offended, and ready at every minute to cry out, “Men of Israel, help!” (Acts 21:28, NASB) “⁵ for we have found [these men] a public menace and ones who stir up dissensions throughout the world” (Acts 24:5, NASB). “[These are the men] who instruct everyone everywhere against our people, our religious beliefs, and our religious institutions” (Acts 21:28, NASB).

Thus it was that the heavens grew black with clouds, and the storm gathered in great haste. For, according to those who rejected Christianity, the more it spread, the more hurt was done. And the number of those who were more and more enraged at “these [people] who have upset the world” (Acts 17:6, NASB) increased, insomuch that more and more cried out, “Away with such [people] from the earth, for [they] should not be allowed to live!” (Acts 22:22, NASB).

And, in so doing, many sincerely believed that they were “offering a service to God” (John 16:2, NASB).

Meanwhile these offended parties did not fail to “scorn [their] name as evil;” (Luke 6:22, NASB) so that “this sect was spoken against everywhere” (Acts 28:22, NASB). People spoke all kinds of evil against them, just as had been done to the Prophets who came before them (Matthew 5:12). And whatever any person would say about them, others would believe; so that offenses grew as numerous as the stars in the heavens.

And then came, at the time foreordained by the Father, all kinds of persecution. Some Christians suffered only shame and reproach for a season; others suffered “the seizure of [their] property;” (Hebrews 10:34, NASB) “³⁶others experienced mocking and flogging, and further, chains and imprisonment;” (Hebrews 11:36, NASB) and others “resisted to the point of shedding blood” (Hebrews 12:4, NASB).

Now it was that the pillars of hell were shaken, and the kingdom of God spread more and more. Sinners everywhere were turned “from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God” (Acts 26:18, NASB). He gave His children such “eloquence and wisdom which none of [their] adversaries [were] able to oppose or refute;” (Luke 21:15, NASB) and their lives were of equal force with their words. But above all, their sufferings spoke to all the world.

They “⁴[commended themselves] as servants of God, in much endurance, in afflictions, in hardships, in difficulties, ⁵ in beatings, in imprisonments, in mob attacks, in labors, in sleeplessness, in hunger,” (2 Corinthians 6:4-5, NASB) “in labor and hardship, through many sleepless nights, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure” (2 Corinthians 11:27, NASB). And when, having fought the good fight, they were led as sheep to the slaughter and offered up as sacrifices in service of their faith, then the blood of each of them found a voice, and the Heathen said, “Though he is dead, he still speaks” (Hebrews 11:4, NASB).

In these ways, Christianity spread itself upon the earth. But how soon did the weeds appear with the wheat, and the mystery of iniquity work as well as the mystery of godliness! How soon did Satan find a seat, even in the temple of God, until “the woman fled into the wilderness,” (Revelation 12:6, NASB) and the faithful again “became few and lowly” (Psalm 107:39, NASB). Here again we walk a well-worn path: The ever-increasing corruptions of the succeeding generations have been largely described in seasons throughout history by those witnesses God raised up to remind us that He had “built His church upon a rock; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it” (Matthew 16:18, NASB).

But shall we not see greater things than these? Yes, greater than those things which have occurred since the beginning of the world. Can Satan cause the truth of God to fail or His promises to be of no effect? If not, the time will come when Christianity will prevail over all and cover the earth. Let us pause here for a moment and survey this strange vision: that of a Christian world. “¹⁰As to this salvation, the prophets who prophesied of the grace that *would come* to us made careful searches and inquiries” (1 Peter 1:10, NASB), and the Spirit which was in them testified:

² Now it will come about that in the last days the mountain of the house of the LORD will be established as the chief of the mountains, and will be raised above the hills; and all the nations will stream to it. . . . And they will beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning knives. Nation will not lift up a sword against nation, and never again will they learn war” (Isaiah 2:2, 4, NASB).

¹⁰ Then on that day the nations will resort to the root of Jesse, who will stand as a signal flag for the peoples; and His resting place will be glorious. . . . ¹² And He will lift up a flag for the nations and assemble the banished ones of Israel, and will gather the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth” (Isaiah 11:10, 12, NASB). ⁶ And the wolf will dwell with the lamb, and the leopard will lie down with the young goat, and the calf and the young lion and the fattened steer *will be* together; and a little boy will lead them. . . . ⁹ They will not hurt or destroy in all My holy mountain, for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea” (Isaiah 11:6, 9, NASB).

. . . .

Imagine now the fullness of time having arrived, and these prophecies having been fulfilled. What a prospect is this! All is peace, “quietness and confidence forever” (Isaiah 32:17, NASB). Here there is no sound of weaponry, no “roar of battle” and no “cloak rolled in blood” (Isaiah 9:5, NASB). ⁶ The enemy has come to an end *in* everlasting ruins” (Psalm 9:6, NASB). War is gone from the earth, and there are no conflicts remaining—no person rising up against person, no country or city divided against itself, and destroying itself. Civil unrest is at an end forevermore, and no one is left who would destroy or hurt a neighbor.

There is no longer any ⁷ oppression” that would make “a wise person look foolish,” (Ecclesiastes 7:7, NASB) no extortion to grind “the face of the poor” (Isaiah 3:15, NASB), no robbery or wrongdoing, no violent seizure of another’s property or injustice of any kind, for all are “content with what [they] have” (Hebrews 13:5, NASB). In these ways, “righteousness and peace have kissed each other” (Psalm 85:10, NASB), they have taken “deep root and filled the land” (Psalm 80:9, NASB), ¹¹ truth sprouting from the earth, and righteousness looking down from heaven” (Psalm 85:11, NASB).

And along with righteousness (or justice) mercy is also found. The earth is no longer full of cruelty. The Lord has destroyed both the blood-thirsty and malicious and the envious and vengeful person. If anyone were to be provoked, there is no one who would return evil for evil (Romans 12:17). Even more, there is no one that does evil—no, not one—, for all are innocent as doves (Matthew 10:16).

But being filled “with all joy and peace in believing” (Romans 15:13, NASB), and “by one Spirit all baptized into one body” (1 Corinthians 12:13, NASB) they all love as brothers and sisters, and they are “of one heart and soul” (Acts 4:32, NASB). “And not one of them claims that anything belonging to him is his own,” (Acts 4:32, NASB). “There is not a needy person among them” (Acts

4:34, NASB) for every person “LOVES THEIR NEIGHBOR AS THEMSELVES” (Matthew 22:39, NASB). And all the people walk by one rule: “¹² In everything, treat people the same way you want them to treat you” (Matthew 7:12, NASB).

It follows, then, that no unkind word can ever be heard among them—no quarrels, no contention of any kind, no complaining or evil-speaking, but everyone “opens their mouth in wisdom, and the teaching of kindness is on their tongue” (Proverbs 31:26, NASB). They are also incapable of fraud or deception. Their love is genuine and without pretense. Their words are always the honest expression of their thoughts, opening as a window into their hearts, that whoever desires may look into their inmost being and see that only love and God are there.

How can this be? Whomever the almighty God reconciles to Himself and wherever He reigns, God “subjects all things to Himself” (Philippians 3:21, NASB), causing every heart to overflow with love and every mouth to be filled with praise. “¹⁵ Blessed are the people who are so situated; blessed are the people whose God is the LORD!” (Psalm 144:15, NASB). “¹ Arise, shine; (says the Lord) for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD has risen upon you” (Isaiah 60:1, NASB). “And humanity has come to know that I, the LORD, am your Savior and your Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob” (Isaiah 49:26, NASB). “I have made peace your administrators, and righteousness your overseers. ¹⁸ Violence will not be heard again in your land, nor devastation or destruction within your borders; But you will call your walls salvation, and your gates praise” (Isaiah 60:17-18, NASB). ²¹ “All your people *are* righteous; they will possess the land forever, the branch of My planting, the work of My hands, that I may be glorified” (Isaiah 60:21, NASB). “¹⁹ No longer will you have the sun for light by day, nor will the moon give you light for brightness; but you will have the LORD as an everlasting light, and your God as your glory” (Isaiah 60:19, NASB).

Now that we have considered Christianity both in its earliest days and as it spread throughout the nations of the earth, I have only now to close this discussion with a plain and practical application.

First, I would ask you, “Where does this Christianity now exist? Where in this world do these Christians live? The inhabitants of which country on earth are filled with the Holy Spirit in the ways the Scriptures have described?

In which country are all inhabitants of one heart and of one soul, cannot endure any among them to lack anything, but continually give to every person according to his or her need, who, one and all, have the love of God filling their hearts and constraining them to love their neighbors as themselves, who have all “put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, *and* patience; ¹³ bearing with one another, and forgiving each other,” (Colossians 3:12-13, NASB), who, neither in word or deed, offend against justice, mercy, or truth, but in every situation do to others as they would have done to themselves? Can we really call any country a Christian country which does not answer to this description? In truth, we must confess together that we have never yet seen a Christian country upon the earth.

I beg you, brothers and sisters, by the mercy of God, if you consider me insane or a fool, then, as a fool bear with me. It is necessary that some one should speak plainly to you, and it is all the more necessary at this time, for who knows if it is the last time? Who knows how soon the righteous Judge may say, "I will no longer hear the prayers of this people?" ¹⁴ Even *though* these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job were in this land, by their *own* righteousness they could *only* save themselves" (Ezekiel 14:14, NASB).

And who will speak plainly to you, if I do not? Therefore, I must speak plainly to you. And I urge you, by the living God, do not harden your hearts against receiving a blessing at my hands. Do not say in your hearts, "Lord, do not send whom you have sent; let me rather perish than be saved by this man!"

Brothers and sisters, "I am convinced of better things regarding you" (Hebrews 6:9, NASB) than what I am about to speak. Let me ask you then, in tender love, and in the spirit of meekness, "Is this a Christian city?" Are we considered as a community of people so filled with the Holy Spirit as to enjoy in our hearts and evidence in our lives the genuine fruits of the Spirit?

Are all civil leaders, all principals and administrators of schools and their respective committees, (not to speak of the inhabitants of the town,) "of one heart and one soul?" Has "the love of God been poured out within our hearts" (Romans 5:5, NASB)? Have we all the "attitude in ourselves which was also in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 2:5, NASB)? And do our lives evidence this claim? Are we holy as He Who has called us is holy, in all the things we say to and about each other?

I beg you to be mindful, brothers and sisters, that we have not been considering novel or obscure notions. We have not been discussing debatable matters, of one kind or another. We have been describing the undoubted, fundamental teachings of our common Christianity. And for your response to this message, I appeal to your own conscience, guided by the word of God. Therefore, the one who is not convicted in his or her own heart, let that person be unconcerned.

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. . . . Before God and this congregation, I own myself to have been of the number, solemnly swearing to observe all those customs which I then knew nothing of; and those statutes which I did not so much as read over, either then, or for some years after. What is perjury, if this is not? But if it is, o what a weight of sin lies upon us! And doesn't the Most High see it?

May it not be one of the consequences of this that so many of us are a generation of triflers; triflers with God, with one another, and with our own souls? For how few of us spend a single hour in private prayer a week? How few of us have any thought of God in the normal course of our daily conversations?

Who of us is, in any degree, acquainted with the work of God's Spirit, His supernatural work in the souls of people? Can any of us stand talk of the Holy Spirit in church? Would we not

assume that any one who spoke of the Holy Spirit was either deceiving us or deceiving themselves? In the name of the Lord God Almighty, I ask, "What religion are we of?" Even the talk of Scriptural Christianity we cannot bear. O my brothers and sisters, what a Christian city is this? ¹²⁶It is time for the LORD to act, *for* we have broken Your Law" (Psalm 119:126, NASB).

For, indeed, how probable is it (is it even possible?) that Christianity, Scriptural Christianity, should again be the religion of this place, that all people among us, from the least to the greatest, should speak and live as people filled with the Holy Spirit? By whom would this Christianity be restored?

Would it be restored by those who are in authority over us? Are they convinced that what I have described is scriptural Christianity? Are they desirous that it be restored? And would any consider it their sacred responsibility and duty to see it restored? And even if one in authority were to have this desire, who would have the influence and the proportionate power to actually bring it into effect? Perhaps some have even tried, but with how little success?

Shall Christianity be restored, then, by young, unknown people? I am not certain that any of our young would be willing to suffer for it. Wouldn't many of us older folks cry out against such a young person, saying, "By doing this you are criticizing and condemning us?" But, I fear there is no danger of being in this situation, because wickedness has overspread us like a flood.

Whom then shall God send—the famine, the pestilence, (the last messengers of God to a guilty land) or the sword? Please no, O Lord! Let us fall into Your hand rather than into the hands of humans. Lord, save us or we will perish! Take us out of the mire that we might not sink! O help us against these enemies for human help is futile! Only unto You are all things possible. According to the greatness of Your power, preserve those that are appointed for destruction, and preserve us in the way that seems right to You; not as we will, but as You will!