

"I WAS SENTENCED TO DEATH IN THE ELECTRIC CHAIR" - Part 1*A True Story told by Clyde Thompson*

[The following article is the true story of Clyde Thompson, once known as the "meanest man in Texas." It wonderfully relates how the power of the gospel of Christ changed a vicious murderer into a great, soul-winning instrument of evangelism on behalf of men behind bars. This narrative was first published in a small tract (now out of print) distributed by Star Bible. It is reproduced here (with some slight editing and re-formatting) for the benefit of our readers.]

There are two motivating factors in a person's life. One brings him to God; another is love for God. Fear brings a man to realize the consequences of his sin and turns him to God, and love for God will cause one to grow in God's favor. He loves God when he sees the love that was manifested in the Son of God.

When people have committed great sins, they sometimes feel that God cannot forgive them and therefore they are fearful before God. But when they come to realize that the blood of Christ is all-sufficient and can wipe away the guilt of sin, then they commit their lives to Christ, and no longer do they fear and tremble; they have put their trust where it ought to be and they know that God can and will deliver them from the power of darkness.

Wild Youthful Days

It is great and wonderful what God did for me. At the age of seventeen, I was sentenced to death in the electric chair—the youngest man ever sentenced to death in Texas up to that time. At the age of nineteen I was the youngest man ever placed on death row at Huntsville in 1931. I had sixty days to live.

There were three of us young men—I was seventeen, another thirteen, and his brother eighteen. We went hunting one night down on the creek; we had borrowed the pistol and shotgun of the brothers' daddy without his knowing it. Having reached the creek, we debated which way we would go. We finally decided to go up the creek. We met two men, one of whom had had some trouble with the older brother and his daddy. We got into an argument and a fight with them, and shot and killed both of them.

Young people, I want you to understand that it makes no difference how good you are, how wonderful your parents are (my father was a gospel preacher) or how wonderful your elders and your deacons and your preacher are. If you are in the wrong place at the right time you could be in serious trouble, and it could take you a whole lifetime to get out of it, if you ever could.

The Death Sentence

I was sentenced to death twice in the same murder case within a year's time. The first sentence was reversed; I was again tried and sentenced a second time. A month after my trial the eighteen-year-old boy was tried and sentenced to death also. After I had received the death sentence the second time, his case was reversed after about twenty months, and two years after his first trial he was tried again in the same case and received a five-year suspended sentence. You know, this is the difference in what money can do. My folks had no money. I went to death row while this young man was still waiting trial in the second murder case. They had two cases of murder against us.

A Commitment to Christ

While I was waiting on death row, they dismissed the second case against me. I heard brother P.D. Wilmeth preaching the gospel over the only radio at that time in the penitentiary. Now there are radios all over the prison system; everybody has access to either a radio or a TV. The radio over which I heard brother Wilmeth belonged to a guard; he had it out in the corridor of death row and I heard the gospel preached there.

Here I am, nineteen years old, and I had never made a commitment to my Lord. I sent for brother Wilmeth and asked that he come up and baptize me, and he did. I was

THE PLEASANT VIEW PLUMB LINE

"...then said the Lord, Behold, I will set a plumb line in the midst of my people Israel..." (Amos 7:8)

LOOKING FOR LIFE?

Text: _____

I. The _____ for Life

Notes:

II. The _____ of Life

Notes:

III. The _____ of Life

Notes:

**THAT THERE BE NO
DIVISIONS AMONG YOU**

Text: _____

I. The _____ of Corinthian Division

Notes:

II. The _____ for Corinthian Division

Notes:

III. The _____ of Corinthian Division

Notes:

taken off death row and baptized there in the Walls Unit at Huntsville. That was six days before I was to be executed. Two days before I was to be executed I received a stay of execution to await the third trial of the other boy—which was the second murder case. Had that young man received the death penalty in that murder trial I should not be here tonight, I assure you.

The governor said that he could not see justice in letting one man die when there were two men equally guilty and he wanted to wait until the young man was tried in the other case. After the stay of execution, I had ninety days to live. Well, I thought that this time it would be the end of it, since I was sure the other boy would receive the death penalty and I would also be executed. But six hours before I was to be executed, the warden came in and told me that my sentence of death had been commuted to life imprisonment. I didn't even believe him. I had made up my mind that this was the end of life. They had already taken me out of my cell and given me my last meal. You can have anything within reason you want to eat for your last meal when you are to be executed, but I didn't have any stomach for it.

...to be continued

SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT

Imagine a bank that credits your account each morning with \$86,400. It carries over no balance from day to day. Every evening it deletes whatever part of the balance you failed to use during that day. What would you do? Draw out **all of it, or course!**

Each of us has such a bank. Its name is Time. Every morning it credits you with 86,400 seconds. Every night it writes off as lost whatever you have failed to invest to good purpose. It carries over no balance. It allows no overdraft. Invest it so as to get from it the utmost in health, happiness, and success! The clock is running. Make the most today.

To realize the value of:

- One year, ask a student who failed a grade.
- One month, ask a mother who gave a birth to a premature baby.
- One week, ask the editor of a weekly newspaper.
- One hour, ask the lovers who are waiting to meet.
- One minute, ask a person who missed the train.
- One second, ask the person who just avoided an accident.
- One millisecond, ask the person who won an Olympic medal.

Value every moment you have, and fount it a gift from God. Treasure it by sharing it with someone special—especially your spouse and children. Remember that time waits for no one. Yesterday is history. Tomorrow is a mystery. Today is a gift. That's why it's called the present. "Teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom" (Proverbs 90:12).

THE BOOK OF DOCTRINAL REPROOF

No book in the New Testament deals with sin in a more personal manner than does First Corinthians. The issues discussed and resolved are those specifically connected with the church in Corinth, those to whom this epistle was written, yet in a general way are issues with which even the contemporary church has to deal. These factors make First Corinthians valuable from the standpoint of history, doctrinal truth, and resolution of sin.

The church in Corinth had its beginning during the time of Acts 18. On his second missionary journey, Paul came to Corinth, later met by Silas and Timothy, and immediately began teaching the people in the synagogue every Sabbath. The result of their work was that many obeyed the gospel, thereby establishing the church of Christ in that city (Acts 18:8). Corinth was home to a number of well-known Bible characters including Aquila, Priscilla, Crispus, Gaius, and Stephanas; all of whom were great assets to the work. Paul stayed and worked in Corinth for a period of eighteen months before finally moving on in his journeys and work, but obviously left thinking the church was well prepared for the challenges it would face shortly.

It is believed that by the time Paul arrived and stayed in Ephesus for three years that he received word of the problems the church in Corinth was facing. Certain contacts he had maintained in the Corinthian church informed him of the divisions and evil practices of certain of the members (I Corinthians 1:10-11). In order to remedy these problems and reestablish doctrinal unity and faithfulness among these brethren, Paul writes a discourse to them, essentially in the form of a sermon, in which he dealt with around ten problems (depending on how they are counted). Among the issues discussed are:

1. Divisions in the church based on “party-ism” and “preacher-itis” (I Corinthians 1-4).
2. Adultery (I Corinthians 5:1-8).
3. A lack of church discipline (I Corinthians 5:9-13).
4. Going to law with one another (I Corinthians 6).
5. God’s law concerning marriage (I Corinthians 7).
6. Eating of meats offered to idols (I Corinthians 8-10).
7. Sporadic behavior in worship assemblies (I Corinthians 11:1-15).
8. Perversion of the Lord’s Supper (I Corinthians 11:16-34).
9. Contention over spiritual gifts (I Corinthians 12-14).
10. False views and doubts over the resurrection (I Corinthians 15).

The reason so many in this church fell into outright apostasy so quickly is virtually unknown, but the following might give some degree of insight into a possibility:

“Since many of the members were converts from heathenism, the church was far from perfect.

However, there were among them true Christians who were ideal in their faith and character (I Corinthians 1:4-8). For the most part they were poor and without pride of birth or learning (1:26).

They were rich ‘in all utterance and knowledge’ and ‘behind in no gift.’ Yet, it was difficult for them to adjust to a life of godliness and chastity in the midst of idolatry and every kind of evil practice” (Dunn).

Essentially, then, those in Corinth who departed the faith did so for the same reason that many continue to depart: the strong pull of sin. Sin has no inherent power, but its appeal is in man’s twisted desires. Those in Corinth simply had not forsaken sin altogether, and it easily pulled them back from the sacrificial life of Christianity.

It is important to note, though, that amid the great problem of sin and the resulting apostasy evident in Corinth, Paul did not write in order to throw up his hands and give up. If Paul had given up on Corinth, he likely would not have bothered addressing them. First Corinthians was not written as a letter of resignation, but a letter of reproof. Paul still saw great potential in the lives of these brethren and thus determined to do all he could to help them work through these problems and reenter the pathways of righteousness once more.

In the closing chapter of the book, Paul addresses the Corinthian Christians with a challenge. He says, “*Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong. Let all your things be done with charity. I beseech you, brethren, (ye know the house of Stephanas, that it is the firstfruits of Achaia, and that they have addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints,) that ye submit yourselves unto such, and to every one that helpeth with us, and laboureth*” (I Corinthians 16:13-16). Paul knew they were able to do right, it was just a matter of having the resolve to do it. Such is the potential of all children of God. Sin must be handled, but lives should be changed. This was Paul’s mission, and thus should be the mission of all servants of the Lord today.

-Andy Brewer