

“Comfortable Christianity?”

1. Intro:

- 1.1. **Things just aren't what they seem to be: Brisbane Australia** (Jan.2, 2008 Pocket Express) – **A snake** (32" non-venomous carpet python) **has been saved by surgery after mistaking 4 golf balls for a meal of chicken eggs**, a veterinarian said Wed. A couple had placed the balls in their chicken coop at Nobby's Creek in New South Wales State to encourage their hen to nest.
- 1.2. **There was a newspaper story** some years ago about 28-year-old **Mark Carver**, who at the time was employed as a **doctor** and as **assistant medical director** at a major hospital. The **problem**, it seems, was that Mark had never gone to medical school or even college for that matter. He allegedly forged documents to get the job as a doctor, and knew enough medical jargon to fool everyone into thinking he was the real thing. **He was sentenced to 7 years in prison where he got to act like a prisoner.** [Probably a situation for which he was much better suited]
 - 1.2.1. **What are you trying to hide today?**
 - 1.2.2. **What in your life is not what it seems to be?**
 - 1.2.2.1. **Let's meet a group of guys in this situation! (1)**

2. COMFORTABLE CHRISTIANITY? (1-11)

- 2.1. Pretending to be spiritual(1), God exposes their hearts to Ezekiel.
 - 2.1.1. **How sad their sin followed them all the way to Babylon...with no change!** {sin is in the heart not in a geographical location!}
 - 2.1.2. **They were like a criminal** imprisoned for murder, who then in prison kills a fellow convict - & wonders why he cannot be released from his cell. (Barclay)
 - 2.1.3. **Heb.4:13 “And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.”**
 - 2.1.4. **Many ask for spiritual counsel...but how many take it?**
- 2.2. **Cherishing sin** in your heart will lead to **practicing sin** in your life! (3)
- 2.3. In ch.8 the prophet had seen idols in the **Temple**, **now** he sees idols in the elder's **hearts**. [Today's idols are more *in the self* than on the shelf]
- 2.4. **Seize** – to take hold of an object **quickly & firmly!**
 - 2.4.1. **Q: Christian have you seized your God?**
 - 2.4.2. **Has He seized your heart? 😊**
- 2.5. **Estranged** = to cause somebody to *stop feeling friendly or affectionate* toward somebody else. (Lit. “to treat as a stranger”)
 - 2.5.1. **Q: Ever feel that way about God?** Feelings just aren't there, affections aren't there?

2.6. **Idols:**

- 2.7. In Numb 21 the Israelites complained about the **manna**, so God sent **snakes**. Eventually Israel repented and begged God to remove the snakes. So God told Moses to make a bronze serpent, mount it on a pole, and whoever looked at it would be healed. It was an amazing provision, and one that worked. **So what became of it?** The Bible says Hezekiah (Read 2 Kings 18:4). For centuries they **preserved, protected** and **polished** it, dragging it with them everywhere, until they ended up worshipping it. Something that was once been a **blessing** became an **idol**.
- 2.8. Last words in 1st John? **“Little children, keep yourselves from idols.”** Or,
- 2.8.1. **Keep away for anything that might take God’s place in your hearts.**
- 2.8.2. **Anything** or **anybody** can become an idol: **“your church, your children, your spouse, your job, your home, your car, your education.”** There’s nothing wrong with **enjoying these blessing;**
It’s only wrong when they begin to take God’s place!
- 2.9. **Hideyoshi, a Japanese warlord** who ruled over Japan in the late 1500s, commissioned a **colossal statue of Buddha** for a shrine in Kyoto. It took **50,000 men 5 years** to build, but the work had scarcely been completed when the earthquake of 1596 brought the roof of the shrine crashing down and wrecked the statue. In a rage Hideyoshi shot an arrow at the fallen colossus. **“I put you here at great expense,”** he shouted, **“and you can’t even look after your own temple.”**
- 2.10. Idolatry is **worshipping** anything that ought to be **used;** or **using** anything that ought to be **worshipped**. Augustine
- 2.11. **“That for which I would give anything and accept nothing in exchange is the most important thing in my life. Whatever that is, is my god.”**
- 2.12. **In *The Wounded Healer*, Henri Nouwen retells a tale from ancient India:** 4 royal brothers decided each to master a special ability. Time went by, and the brothers met to reveal what they had learned. **“I have mastered a science,”** said the 1st, **“by which I can take but a bone of some creature and create the flesh that goes with it.”** **“I,”** said the 2nd, **“know how to grow that creature’s skin and hair if there is flesh on its bones.”** **The 3rd** said, **“I am able to create its limbs if I have flesh, the skin, and the hair.”** **“And I,”** concluded the 4th, **“know how to give life to that creature if its form is complete.”**
Thereupon the brothers went into the jungle to find a bone so they could demonstrate their specialties. As fate would have it, the bone they found was a lion’s. 1 added flesh to the bone, **the 2nd** grew hide and hair, **the 3rd** completed it with matching limbs, and **the 4th** gave the lion life. **Shaking its mane, the ferocious beast arose and jumped on his creators. He killed them all and vanished contentedly into the jungle.**

- 2.12.1. We too have the capacity to create what can devour us.
- 2.12.2. **Goals and dreams** can consume us; **Possessions and property** can turn and destroy us...unless we 1st seek God's kingdom and righteousness, and allow Him to breathe into what we make of life.
- 2.13. **Q:** If men whose hearts are **inwardly alienated** from God come professing to seek guidance from Him, will God answer them?
- 2.13.1. **What must they do 1st?** (see vs.6)
- 2.14. **REPENT!** (6)
- 2.15. **Repent** – used over **1,050** times in OT (**62** in Ezekiel)
- 2.15.1. To both turn **from sin**, & turn **back to obedience**.
- 2.15.2. It was both **Repenting & Returning!**
- 2.16. Always **mercy** ready to be handed out!
- 2.17. Instead of giving them the information they **desired**, God instructed Ezekiel to give them the information they **needed**...God's attitude toward their idolatry!
- 2.17.1. The message they needed to hear was to simply, **Repent! Turn away!**
Turn your faces!
- 2.18. **PRONE TO WANDER!** (7-11)
- 2.19. That the house of Israel no longer **stray from me** –
- 2.19.1. **Story** – Zach& I yesterday taking dogs for a run. Drove around looking for open property behind Vineyards. Found this vast projected that had been graded. They had acres in which to run, wind in their hair...but no...they turned & ran right back to the street. Calling them to come to me they wouldn't.
- 2.19.1.1. Come thou fount – “Prone to **wander**, Lord, I feel it, Prone to **leave the God I love.**”
- 2.19.2. **Read Story Of Robert Robinson.**

3. **NOAH, DANIEL, JOB! (12-23)**

- 3.1. 4 Severe judgments:
- 3.2. **THE THREE DELIVERERS!** (12-14)
- 3.2.1. All 3 **delivered** there family or friends, all three **overcame adversity**.
- 3.3. **Noah** saved his family!
- 3.3.1. **By faith Noah**, when warned about things not yet seen, in holy fear built an ark **to save his family**. By his faith he condemned the world & became heir of the righteousness that comes by faith. Heb.11:7
- 3.4. **Daniel** rescued his friends!
- 3.4.1. Neb was requiring of all his “wise men”, not only the **interpretation** of his dream but **the dream itself**. Daniel's God gave it...(Large Image:

Head/gold=Babylon; Chest & arms/silver=Medo-Persian; Belly & thighs/bronze=Greece; Legs & feet/iron,clay=Rome).

- 3.4.2. **Moreover, at Daniel's request the king appointed Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego administrators over the province of Babylon, while Daniel himself remained at the royal court. Dan.2**
- 3.5. **Job** prayed for his 3 friends & delivered them!
- 3.5.1. **Read** Job 42:7-10.
- 3.5.2. **But nobody's intercession** would save Jerusalem, or anybody in it.
- 3.6. **A TRIPLE REPEAT!** (15-20)
- 3.6.1. Vs.15-20 is a triple repeat of what was just said.
- 3.6.2. Repetition over & over again of the same basic principle.
- 3.6.2.1. **Principle:** "If a nation persists in its sin, then it will not be delivered from judgment, even if 3 of the world's most righteous men were amongst its citizens."
- 3.6.3. For a while the righteous are like children, their fingers plugging the holes in the dike, desperately holding back the flood of destruction. But eventually, they are more holes than fingers, & the floods of destruction pour through, wreaking damage in their path.
- 3.6.3.1. Such would be **Jerusalem's fate!**
- 3.7. **A REMNANT!** (21-23)
- 3.8. God does nothing without cause. He is **purposeful** in everything.
- 3.9. **The Taj Mahal is one of the most beautiful and costly tombs ever built, but there is something fascinating about its beginnings.** In 1629, when the **favorite wife** of Indian ruler **Shah Jahan** died, he ordered that a **magnificent tomb** be built as a memorial to her. The shah placed his wife's casket in the middle of a parcel of land, and construction of the temple **literally began around it**. But several years into the venture, **the Shah's grief for his wife gave way to a passion for the project**. One day while he was surveying the sight, he reportedly stumbled over a **wooden box**, and he had some workers **throw it out**. **It was months before he realized that his wife's casket had been destroyed.** The original purpose for the memorial became lost in the details of construction.
- 3.9.1. **Never, in God's plans for us!**
- 3.10. **Daniel, Noah, & Job**, by their righteousness, could rescue **a nation**; **Yet** it is central to the Christian Gospel that one man, **Jesus**, could, by His righteousness, rescue **a world!**

Come Thou Fount Story

It was a bright Sunday morning in 18th century London, but **Robert Robinson's** mood was anything but sunny. All along the street there were people hurrying to church, but in the midst of the crowd Robinson was a lonely man. The sound of church bells reminded him of years past when his faith in God was strong and the church was an integral part of his life. It had been years since he set foot in a church—years of wandering, disillusionment, and gradual defection from the God he once loved. That love for God—once fiery and passionate—had slowly burned out within him, leaving him dark and cold inside.

Robinson heard the clip-clop, clip-clop of a horse-drawn cab approaching behind him. Turning, he lifted his hand to hail the driver. But then he saw that the cab was occupied by a young woman dressed in finery for the Lord's Day. He waved the driver on, but the woman in the carriage ordered the carriage to be stopped. "Sir, I'd be happy to share this carriage with you," she said to Robinson. "Are you going to church?" Robinson was about to decline, then he paused. "Yes," he said at last. "I am going to church." He stepped into the carriage and sat down beside the young woman. As the carriage rolled forward Robert Robinson and the woman exchanged introductions. There was a flash of recognition in her eyes when he stated his name. "That's an interesting coincidence," she said, reaching into her purse. She withdrew a small book of inspirational verse, opened it to a ribbon-bookmark, and handed the book to him. "I was just reading a verse by a poet named Robert Robinson. Could it be...?" He took the book, nodding. "Yes, I wrote these words years ago." "Oh, how wonderful!" she exclaimed. "Imagine! I'm sharing a carriage with the author of these very lines!" But Robinson barely heard her. He was absorbed in the words he was reading. They were words that would one day be set to music and become a great hymn of the faith, familiar to generations of Christians:

Come, Thou Fount of every blessing,
Tune my heart to sing Thy grace'
Streams of mercy, never ceasing,
Call for songs of loudest praise.

His eyes slipped to the bottom of the page where he read:

Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it—
Prone to leave the God I love;
Here's my heart, O take and seal it,
Seal it for Thy courts above.

He could barely read the last few lines through the tears that brimmed in his eyes. "I wrote these words—and I've lived these words. 'Prone to wander...prone to leave the God I love.'"

The woman suddenly understood. "You also wrote, 'Here's my heart, O take and seal it.' You can offer your heart again to God, Mr. Robinson. It's not too late."

And it wasn't too late for Robert Robinson. In that moment he turned his heart back to God and walked with him the rest of his days.

Ron Lee Davis, *Courage to Begin Again*, (Harvest House, Eugene, OR; 1978), pp. 145-147