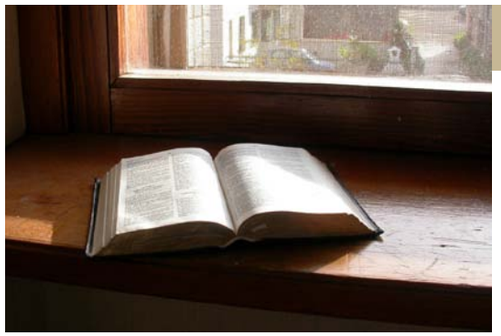


fact of the matter is that one day Jesus will return and judge every soul who has ever lived! All of us will one day give an account of ourselves before the **"judgment seat of Christ"** (2 Pet. 5:10-11). It could be today. It could be tomorrow. It could be a year from now, or ten thousand years from now, but regardless of the time He will return. While souls *sleep through the fire* thinking all is well the time grows ever shorter!

Christians we need to wake up! If there is sin in our lives—we must put it out! If there are people we know who need the gospel—we must find the way to tell them. *Houses are burning,* souls are dying, and the time is now!

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Faithful Sayings

BULLETIN OF THE OLSEN PARK CHURCH OF CHRIST

Services
Sunday: 9:00 AM
9:30 AM
10:30 AM
Wednesday: 7:00 PM

Elders:
Patrick Ledbetter
Brady McAlister
Jeff Nunn

Deacons:
Ben Hight
Blake McAlister
Walker McAnear
Sam Nunn
Lance Purcell
Justin Smiley
Trevor Yontz

Evangelist:
Kyle Pope

Burning Houses

By Kyle Pope

You can turn on your television almost any evening and hear stories of disaster and heartbreak. A fire starts in the night and a family's home is burned to the ground. In the worst cases children have died as they slept—entire families are lost in flames. No matter how hardened we may be to the pains of life none of us can hear news of such tragedy without aching within our own heart to know our fellow human beings have suffered such devastating loss.

As Christians it is right for us to feel this way. John warned, **"Whoever has this world's goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him?"** (1 John 3:17, NKJV). An underlying lesson of the parable of the Good Samaritan is that servants of God should be moved by the suffering of others and not pass **"by on the other side"** ignoring their hardships (Luke 10:31-32). The irony of this is that while we often ache for the material loss we see others suffer we can easily become calloused and indifferent to spiritual loss. Everyday we see thousands around us who by their sin and

unbelief are literally fanning the flames of their own destruction, but we are not moved at all. We turn our heads and focus on our own business while each day another soul is lost.

Why is this? How can Christians who claim to have **"the knowledge of God"** (1 Cor. 15:34) close their eyes to the spiritual suicide being committed all around us? Certainly there are those who as **"stewards of the mysteries of God"** diligently seek to be **"found faithful"** (1 Cor. 4:1-2). They teach people whenever they can. They invite friends to services. They participate in collective efforts to teach the lost. They work to persuade them to obey the gospel and seek to turn souls from sin. But sometimes good people, who love the truth fall victim to a few basic problems.

1. Failure to See the Spiritual Side of Life. It is understandable that in an age in which everything we see, touch, taste, and smell serves to shape our perception of what constitutes reality, that we can easily come to feel that these things form the sum total of our existence. The Bible tells us there is another realm outside of our senses. Paul revealed, **"The things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal"** (2 Cor. 4:18). That tells us not only that a spiritual, unseen realm exists, but that it is actually more enduring than the material realm we can experience with our senses. Paul tells us through the Holy Spirit that **" the form of this world is passing away"** (1 Cor. 7:31). There will come a time when all that we now know and experience in this life will not seem like the concrete, practical, and tangible reality we now imagine it to be. When it has passed and given way to the eternal, spiritual dimension that is now unseen, the present material realm will seem like a fleeting memory of the past. Christians must understand that the present appearance of things does not constitute its ultimate reality or value.



2. Love of the World. In some ways it would be easier if we lived in a world in which, even if people around us were not Christians, they lived by the moral standards taught in the Bible. In such a case our conduct would not be hindered by other people's failure to believe. In some respects that has been our American heritage—a country shaped by biblical moral standards, in spite of the fact that not all Americans were Christians. Now, times have changed! Many of the practices we see around us, that are accepted by the world, are not condoned by the Scriptures. Perhaps when times were different we did too little to help moral people ground their morality in sound faith. Are we now reaping the fruits of our inactivity in the past?

Whatever the causes of our present condition, if we now close our eyes and turn the other way, our tolerance of sin and unbelief will not only allow others to trudge blindly toward the path to hell, but we ourselves may become so enticed by the deceptive nature of sin that we fall in line behind them. The Holy Spirit tells us through the apostle John, **"Do not love the world or the things in the world. It anyone loves the world the love of the Father is not in him"** (1 John 2:15). Two verses after this, much like Paul said to the Romans, he declares, **"the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever"** (1 John 2:17). We cannot fall so in love with the temporary that we lose sight of things that are eternal.

3. Forgetting the Judgment to Come. Peter warned of those who will say, **"Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation"** (2 Pet. 3:4). Peter gave this warning of **"scoffers"** who would come in the **"last days"** (2 Pet. 3:3). Do we ever feel that way? Some of us have lived long lives—why hasn't Jesus returned? Peter explained that Jesus's delay is a demonstration of His patience. He waits not wanting souls who are still in sin to perish. Every moment He delays is one more moment He allows some soul to **"come to repentance"** (2 Pet. 3:9). But we must not take the Lord's patience to mean that He will not return. The simple