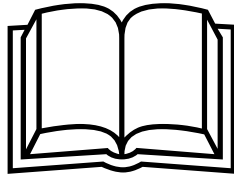


Look to Jesus

William Reid
1814 – 1896



Mount Zion Bible Institute
Reading and Study Guide
Course LTJa
(complete)

*“Looking unto Jesus, the
Author and Finisher of our faith.”*

Hebrews 12:2

Instructions for this course

Course LTJa is complete in this one booklet. The *reading material* and the *study guide* for this course are both included.

Before each lesson: pray for God to give a teachable heart and understanding.



Begin each lesson by reading the related chapter in this booklet.



Answer the study questions at the end of the chapter.

Use the required answer sheet format, putting your name and course information on each sheet (sample on page 2).

Use any standard note paper (or answer sheets if provided).

Try to be as clear and concise as possible.

Please do not rush! Meditate on what God wants you to learn.

Don't go to the next question until completing the current one.

If, and only if, you are taking the course as correspondence study (with written feedback from others):

After completing all the lessons 1 to 4, send the completed answer sheets to your course coordinator. Request the next course at this time.

Only mail your answer sheets, not other materials.

All sent answers are handled confidentially.

Label the envelope's lower left with: student, course, and lesson numbers.

Two months are allotted for completion of this introductory course. Extensions may be granted upon written request.



Your answer sheets are returned to you after review.

Keep this booklet and answers together for future reference.

Look to Jesus

Reading and Study Guide
Course LTJa

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Sample Answer Sheet

_____	_____	<u>LTJa</u>	_____	_____
Your name	Student number	Course number	Lesson number	Date

<u>Question #</u>	<u>Your Answer</u>
_____	_____

_____	_____

_____	_____

_____	_____

_____	_____

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Our Need of Jesus

“For the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.” – Luke 19:10

To the Unsaved Reader: Are You a Sinner?

(For those who believe themselves saved, please read and answer this section too.)

Dear Friend, Has God’s Holy Spirit shown you that you are a *sinner*?

Without the Holy Spirit, you might intellectually learn that you are a sinner from the Word of God, or confess yourself a sinner in prayer. But to really understand that you are a sinner in the light of divine illumination, to feel it with a divinely enlightened conscience, and to realize the terrible *fact* as if in the very presence of the God of infinite holiness, and in light of the solemn realities of coming eternity—this is a matter of awful *experience*, not of mere learning or empty confession!

Oh, how would it be if the Holy Spirit convicted you that you are misled, ruined, lost, and in danger of hell every breath you draw! I pray to God you may be so convicted, even this very moment; for were you to die an unpardoned sinner (and you *may* die any moment), you would lift up your eyes in hell being in torment, and find yourself a sinner forevermore where no Savior ever comes!

*“He that believeth on Him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.”
—John 3:18*

Perhaps you say, “I admit I am a sinner, I know that I have sinned; but I don’t understand what you mean by saying that I am a *lost* sinner—a ruined sinner. I am not lost; I am not ruined.”

“Well, I know you are not *completely* lost, or you would not be reading this. Bless God for that mercy. But if you are not lost, you can have nothing to do with the Savior, for He has come ‘to seek and to save that which was *lost*’” (Luke 19:10). Man, as soon as he fell, was lost; God’s first

question implies this—“Adam, where art thou?” (Gen. 3:9). God, in grace, was seeking man after the Fall, because he was lost; God in Christ is still seeking sinners because they are lost.¹

It may be, however, that you have heard so much preaching about sinners, that you will readily admit that the Bible teaches that sinners are all utterly ruined and lost. But do you feel that the Bible speaks to you, when it comes to you personally, and says, *you* are a sinner: *you* are ruined and lost; that *you* are “condemned already,” and the wrath of God abides upon *you*? To cry “God be merciful to *me a sinner!*” is quite a different thing from the easy-going acknowledgment, “we are all sinners.”

When a certain student heard Robert Haldane, a great preacher, reading a chapter from the *Epistle to the Romans* concerning all men being sinners by nature, he was astonished. Being clearly convinced by the passages preached, he said to Mr. Haldane, “Now I do indeed see this doctrine in the Bible.” “Yes,” replied he, “but do you see it *in your heart?*” It was a simple question, but it proved the sword of the Spirit. It awakened his slumbering conscience to recognize the terrible fact that *sin was in his heart*; and, by the grace of God, it led to his conversion to Christ. He immediately felt his need of Jesus when he found himself a *lost sinner*.²

My friend, has this experience been yours? Have you seen sin in your heart? Have you seen and felt it to be a poison that has passed through every part of your nature?

False Security through “Religion”

Many people have had such a severe view and sense of sin in their hearts and lives that it has driven them to utter despair, and some have been almost deprived of life in the experience. Perhaps some of you have never lost an hour’s quiet sleep, nor relish for a single meal, by the sight of your soul’s sinful and lost condition! And yet, if you only saw it by the grace of the Holy Ghost, your condition is quite as bad and hopeless as theirs!

How dreadful such a person’s case! A sinner not far from perdition, and yet happy, careless, and reckless of eternity! Notwithstanding all his outward correctness this man’s case is desperate! Many will go to hell mocking God on the way, pretending to serve Him when in fact, all their praying, hearing, praising, and religious communicating is but a downright insult to the All-Seeing One!

¹ The *Fall* occurred in Genesis 3 when mankind through Adam rebelled against God’s authority.

² Each person is a “lost sinner” before God saves him. Once we have been saved (“born again”), then we still commit sin (though less and less over time), but we are no longer a “lost” sinner, because Jesus has saved us from the eternal penalty for our sins.

Many have truth in their heads, the Bible in one hand, and the world in the other hand. While many people perish through carelessness and apathy to the Gospel, many others are led into hell blindfolded by the superstitious rites of a cruel priesthood. Multitudes of the church-going people seem bent on entering eternity arrayed in the holy garments of a religious profession. But it will be only to hear, with astonished ears, the withering words from a Christ's lips, "I never knew you; depart from Me ye that work iniquity" (Matthew 7:23).

Many are deceiving themselves by joining one of the churches of Christ before *being joined* to Christ Himself by the Holy Spirit!

Conviction of Personal Sin

A young man, a pattern of good conduct and religiousness, was suddenly arrested one night by the Spirit of God.

"Oh, my sin! My Sin!" he cried. "What sin?" asked a friend, wondering what sin could be lying upon *his* conscience. "Oh, it is my cold neglect of the loving Savior." For four hours he writhed in torture under a dreadful sense of sin; and after the Lord revealed Himself to him, he vowed that his life should be one living sacrifice to his Redeemer's praise. His conviction and conversion were the means of leading more than one professing believer in the town to inquire, "*Am I saved or lost?*"

It is greatly to be feared that many professing believers are *not saved*, and will be in hell forever unless they repent of their dependence upon church membership and good behavior. They, like this religious youth, must be brought to Jesus by the Holy Spirit through the conviction personal sin. Religion saves none! The precious blood of Christ alone (1 Peter 1:19) can save us from sin and wrath. Are you, my dear friend, *saved or lost?* If you are saved, do you remember a time when you were lost? Can you tell something of your conviction and conversion? Those who are saved are able to tell how they were brought to a sense of sin and knowledge of salvation.

Have you felt that you are a sinner and, as such, have you sought salvation? While passing along the street one morning, a young man rushed out of his office and caught me in his arms, "O sir, I have found Christ." "When and how?" were the questions I earnestly put to him. He then gave me the following account of himself: "You know, sir, I have been very anxious for some weeks past. That anxiety became dreadful on Friday night. I was engaged in prayer. While on my knees my burden became intolerable. I felt my sins pressing on my heart as if that warehouse were built on my body. I could not move. I could not rise from my knees. I cried with such agony that my next door neighbor rose out of bed and rushed in to know what was wrong. He prayed with me. Before he left I found peace through believing on the Lord Jesus Christ."

My dear friend, have you known nothing of an experience like that? Have you ever felt your sins pressing on your heart, as if the weight of a warehouse were lying upon your body; and do you know what it is to have peace “through believing on the Lord Jesus Christ” (Acts 16:31)?

If you do not *find out your sin*, and bring it to Calvary to get it pardoned and washed away through the blood of Jesus, be sure that your sin will find you out. And you will be brought to the judgment seat to be condemned by Jesus, and sent away into everlasting punishment.

Salvation for All

A minister, who considered the Gospel extremely simple and intelligible, was struck one day with the expression “*The unsearchable riches of Christ.*” “The unsearchable riches of Christ,” he said within himself, “I never found, I never knew that there were unsearchable riches in *Him!*” He became deeply convinced of sin; and, while pacing his room some time afterwards, he was led to contemplate two other passages of Scripture, “*Without shedding of blood is no remission,*” and “*The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin.*” He believed in Jesus, was washed clean in His blood, and was filled with a “joy unspeakable” (Ephesians 3:8, Hebrews 9:22, 1 Peter 1:8). “I went upstairs and down again (said he), backwards and forwards in my room, clapping my hands for joy, and crying out, “I have found Him! I have found Him! I have found Him, whom my soul loveth!”

It should not be thought incredible that a *minister* should thus be preaching *salvation* to others while *lost* himself, for we read in the third chapter of the gospel by John that even Nicodemus, a master of Israel, had no idea that he was required to be “born again.” It was to this ruler of the Jews that Jesus addressed the solemn language, “*Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.*”

Good Works

You may perhaps think, “If I do better, God will pardon me,” but that is a vain thought. No amount of reformation for the present can atone for the sins of the past. The God of inflexible justice has you in custody as a criminal, by law condemned to die, and all your fancied good works are now but prison-house services (works questioned because one is under pressure and scrutiny, and is therefore temped to act better to gain relief) and can avail you nothing for justification before God. The sentence is passed; and even if you were to give perfect obedience to all God’s commandments, that would be only your duty, and duty discharges no debt. If you cling to doing better as the ground of your pardon and acceptance with God, your damnation is sure. For Scripture says,

*“All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags, we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away”
- Isaiah 64:6, and,*

“Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us” - Titus 3:5.

But although you can do nothing to merit God’s favor, you need not perish; for what a man cannot attain, he can obtain by faith. We declare unto you “good tidings,” that you may be saved upon the ground of the finished and accepted work of One who is mighty to save. The holy Jehovah, in sovereign mercy, sent His Son Jesus to be the Savior of the lost! He endured the cross, bore the curse of the law, made atonement, and opened up a way of access to God’s favor, even for the chief of sinners!

“For He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.” - 2 Corinthians 5:21

God will save sinners as an act of free grace, and not otherwise; He will share His glory with no other, therefore Salvation is by grace, or not at all. There is a glorious way of “being justified freely by His grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.” The way of works³ is the way of death. The new and living way of free grace has been opened and consecrated for us by Christ, the only mediator between God and man. If you ask the question, “What must I do to be saved?” the answer is simple and satisfying, for it is that which God’s Holy Word supplies, “*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved*” (Acts 16:31).

Although it is utter folly to try to get up a personal righteousness in which to appear before God, many are doing it. There is a girl who had been very frivolous at one time, but who is now a devoted Christian. When asked by a minister, “What brought you first to think about your soul?,” she replied, “Amid all my folly I often thought seriously of my soul and of judgment, and often had partial changes toward good in my life; but just as often, in the time of temptation, I fell back, and my convictions were lost. When I recovered them I felt very uneasy, because I knew that with my vain heart I could not appear before God. I tried once very seriously to work out a righteousness of my own, but it was all in vain. I tried it a second time, with the same result, till at last my mind was fixed on the righteousness of Jesus Christ alone, and I saw a glory and perfection in Him that I had not seen before. With my whole heart I trusted in

³ *Editor:* The “way of works” spoken of (salvation through keeping the law) was never God’s actual way of salvation, not even in Old Testament times. Salvation is and always has been by faith alone. But the Pharisees in Jesus’ time and many in our day think that doing good works will earn them favor with God. This is against the Biblical Gospel of justification by faith alone.

the merits of Christ, and I feel my peace growing, and my love to God growing, and I think I could not only live for Christ but die for Christ.”

My dear friend, has this been your experience? Have you seen such an inexpressible glory and perfection in the righteousness of the Savior of the lost, that you have trusted in His merits with your whole heart, and now believe that you “*could not only live for Christ, but die for Christ?*” Have you had a spiritual conviction of sin, and a conversion experience? Are you living for self and the world, or for Christ and eternity? Ask yourself seriously, before you read anymore, this all-important question, *Am I Lost or Saved? Am I trusting in externals such as a “sinners prayer” or walking an aisle, or have I had a genuine experience of my own sin as sin—sin as God sees it: severely offensive, odious, His very enemy at which He has shot all the arrows of His wrath, even to the bruising of His own Son? Am I trifling with, or embracing God’s enemy (sin) in full view of the thrice-Holy God? If so, then I am undone, and know nothing as I should in my walk with God.*

Study Questions

Lesson 1 Our Need of Jesus

First please read the preceding text.

Please answer the questions below from the information given in this chapter. Before you begin the questions, please read the chapter completely.

Please read slowly enough so you understand what you read. Also, it is always good to pray before each lesson asking the LORD for wisdom to apply what you learn to your life—and to enable you to love Him with all your mind, heart, soul, and strength...for this is the greatest commandment (Mark 12:30).

Very Important Note: We ask you to always get your answer from the text, but **use your own words** in your answer. Please **do not** merely quote the text for your answer. Rather, read what the text says, think about the meaning of what it says, and summarize the meaning of the text in your own words for your answer. In this way, you will learn much more than simply a “search/find/quote” method for answering the questions.

Are you a sinner?

1. Have you had the awful experience of being a lost sinner that the author describes in chapter 1?

God's Holy Law

2. Please read the following and answer Question 2 at the very end of this section.

The **Ten Commandments** (Exodus 20:1-17) are a short summarization of what God requires of all mankind. Honestly looking at our actions and attitudes in the plain light of God's law is devastating. God justly condemns all men as lost sinners because we all have broken God's holy law. Take some time to think carefully about the following.

- 1) Ex. 20:3 *"Thou shalt have no other gods before Me."*
We have other "gods" before the one true God when we give our time, talents, and interests to serving our own desires, instead of serving God in all things. Have you slighted and disregarded God and His laws for most of your life?
- 2) Ex. 20:4 *"Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth."*
This command prohibits all forms and means of worship that are not expressly authorized in the Word of God. Are you guilty of making a god of your own imagination and worshipping him, rather than God as He has revealed Himself in His Holy Bible? (This happens when people say, "My god is a god of love, and would never send anyone to hell," etc.)
- 3) Ex. 20:7 *"Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain; for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain."*
We take the name of God in vain any time we speak of Him as common-place, or even when we doubt or hate His sovereign rule over all circumstances (hitting our thumb with a hammer and cursing, for example). Doubting God's goodness and power dishonors His Name. Unbelief in His providential rule is a wicked sin! Have you cursed and grumbled when things did not go your way?
- 4) Ex. 20:8-11 *"Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: But the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: For in six days the LORD*

made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it.”

The Sabbath day is the seventh day (Saturday) for the Jewish people. Christians observe the “Lord’s Day” on the first day of the week (Sunday)—the day Jesus rose from the dead. It is to be set aside as a day of worship and honor for God, without worldly or personal entertainments. Read Isaiah 58:13-14 and then reflect on this: Have you ever even tried to put just *one day* apart to worship God and not think your own thoughts? If you have ever tried to do this, have you ever succeeded?

- 5) Ex. 20:12 *“Honor thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee.”*

This means just what it says—to “honor” is to treat with respect, to resolve all bitterness, to communicate regularly, and to meet their basic needs. Is this what you have done faithfully since your youngest days as a child?

- 6) Ex. 20:13 *“Thou shall not murder.”*

Jesus defined this to include any form of anger or verbal abuse toward another (see Matthew 5:21-22). Have you ever murdered, abused, or been angry with anyone?

- 7) Ex. 20:14 *“Thou shall not commit adultery.”*

Jesus defined this to mean even looking at another with a sexual desire (see Matthew 5:27-28). Are you blameless in the light of this commandment?

- 8) Ex. 20:15 *“Thou shall not steal.”*

This means taking even a small item such as a paper clip from your work place. There are no exceptions or qualifications in this command. Will you stand blameless on God’s righteous judgment day in light of this command?

- 9) Ex. 20:16 *“Thou shall not bear false witness against your neighbor”*

This is the sin of slander and lying. Lying has been defined as “any species of designed deceit.” It includes even putting a good slant on what we say in order to impress another or get a good outcome. It is anything other than the pure factual truth. As well we must be careful to avoid gossip and backbiting, as these are serious sins in the eyes of God. Is what you have said tainted with some slant to-

ward an advantage to yourself? How many times have you NOT slandered or gossiped when you had the chance to do so?

10) Ex. 20:17 *“Thou shall not covet...”*

This is craving something that we do not have. The Bible commands us to be *content*. Being content shows that we have faith that God is good and knows what is best for us. Like all sin, the sin of covetousness is the soul-damning sin of unbelief in the promises of God (Hebrews 13:5, Romans 8:28).

Is this not the most piercing of all of God’s commands? Is your heart a pot of selfish desires; is your mind often planning to bring your desires about; are you giving your efforts to getting what you want?

Do you think that the above is an overstatement, or is it the true state of all men’s hearts, apart from being made a new creature in Christ by God’s grace?

The true state of the heart is seen in the light of God’s Law. Do you think that just doing some good works will help such a heart be right before God? Can you see why Christ said, “you must be born again”? Do you need a new heart?

Romans 3:19 *“Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.”*

Galatians 3:10 *“For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.”*

James 2:10 *“For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.”*

Question 2: Overall, do you keep God’s law perfectly even now?

Please answer this on your answer sheet for Question 2. Answer it in detail only if you think you have obeyed the commandments (this is not to be a time of confession to men, but a time to reflect on your life in the light of God’s holy law). So please keep you answer simple and short if you have failed to keep the commandments.

3. *Making It Personal*

- a. The Bible teaches that all men are sinners by nature (Romans 3:9-12; Jeremiah 17:9). Have you “seen and felt sin to be a poison that has passed through every part of your nature”? Explain your answer.

- b. When a man is truly born again he sees himself more and more a wretched sinner. This is not because he is sinning more, but because the Spirit of God shows the believer more of his heart as he grows in the faith. Is this your growing experience? Why or why not?

False security through “religion”

4.
 - a. Can you see that the praying and praising of a religious person who trusts in his own righteousness would be an insult to the All-Seeing One? Explain your answer.
 - b. Have you been like this?
 - c. Can one be saved by being joined to a church before being joined to Christ? Explain your answer.
 - d. Who does this joining to Christ?
5. How would you describe yourself:
 - as the one who thinks he is not such a bad person compared to most others?
 - as a *religious person* whose heart is not completely honest with God?
 - as one who does his best to live right by the Ten Commandments?
 - as one who feels devastated by the sight of his life in the light of God’s holy law?

Your good works

6. Our good works cannot help us to secure God’s pardon or clear our guilt. Please explain why this is true.
7. What are the grounds upon which you have “‘good tidings’ that you may be saved”?
8. What is the way of salvation open to us in Jesus Christ?
9. Does your life demonstrate new birth with freedom in Christ, or dependence on doing good works to try to earn God’s favor? Explain your answer.

Look to Jesus

*“Look unto Me, and be ye saved...for I am God,
and there is none else.” – Isaiah 45:22*

Condemned to Die

Dear Friend, My heart’s desire and prayer to God for you is that you be *saved*. You may regard yourself as a lost sinner; and well you may, for it is actually true. You were born in sin; you have lived in sin, and on account of sin, you are condemned to die by God’s holy law, “for the wages of sin is death!” (Romans 6:23). But the grace of God is exceeding abundant; and He has given the most indisputable proof that He loves sinners!

What God Did

Jesus is an all-sufficient Savior; and He is able and willing to save the very chief of sinners. His work of *redemption*⁴ is finished, as the Scriptures show. He was wounded for our transgressions; He was bruised for our iniquities. He Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree. He died for the ungodly. He died—the Just One for the unjust. He appeared in our nature, took our place, “was made under the law,” and endured its curse. He has put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself; and by the obedience of His life, He hath satisfied the law’s requirements, therefore, God is well pleased with all who believe in His name “for His righteousness’ sake.” [John 19:30, Isaiah 53:5, 1 Peter 2:24, Romans 5:6, Galatians 4:4, 2 Peter 1:17, Isaiah 42:21]

God’s chief aim in history is to glorify Himself. One way He does this is by saving wicked rebels through His free grace. One of God’s glories is His delight in mercy. We can see this in the fact that God sent His Son to die for His enemies—to redeem the rebellious and ungodly from *merited wrath*.⁵

The most important thing now is to know the real foundation of a ruined, hell-deserving sinner’s peace. Jesus is our peace, who has made peace by the blood of His cross. We have all sinned and come short of the glory of God. Eternal death is the *sad result* of sin, for the holy Jehovah

⁴ Redemption is the payment of a price that is due; i.e., Christ’s death as full payment for the penalty due for the sins of His people.

⁵ ‘Merited wrath’ is the just wrath of God toward our sin; it was deserved (merited) because we have broken His holy law (2 Cor. 5:18, Micah 7:18, John 3:16).

says in His Word, that every soul that sins must die. He will by no means clear the guilty. But, out of His great love He made “Christ to be sin for us, Who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.” “In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him.” [Ephesians 2:14, Colossians 1:20, Romans 3:23, Ezekiel 18:20, Exodus 34:7, 2 Corinthians 5:21, 1 John 4:9]

The thought of redeeming lost sinners from the curse of the law originated in the loving heart of God. And when Jesus appeared in our world it was as God “manifest in the flesh” (1 Timothy 3:16), and to “redeem us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us” (Galatians 3:13). He gave Himself for our sins. *This exchange* was wonderful, and full of love. Jesus satisfied the law and justice of God. He bore the curse of the law, and thus delivers us from that curse. We have broken the law, and are guilty and under the curse, but if we are found in Christ, God reckons us as free from guilt and the curse because He *imputed* our guilt to Christ, who bore the curse at the cross.⁶ Christ died, but He was raised again for our *justification*, and is even at the right hand of God, where He makes intercession for us. [Titus 2:14; Romans 4:25, 8:34]

If You Want Pardon

Now, then, if any poor sinner wants pardon, let him draw near to God in the name of Jesus and he will find redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of all his sins. Dear friend, are you thirsting for pardon? If so, “He will abundantly pardon.” [Hebrews 10:20, Ephesians 1:7, Isaiah 55:7, Psalm 130:7]

Remember, “Salvation is of the Lord.” He Himself must save you. His own arm alone will bring you salvation. Take care lest you fall into the error (so common among anxious souls) of making a savior of a “decision,” or experience.⁷ Your own experience may be delightful, but it is a poor substitute for Christ. The most elevated state of mind cannot prove a savior. It is upon Jesus bleeding, dying, atoning for sin, and suffering under the dreadful stroke of the sword of God’s justice, that your eye must be fixed. [Jonah 2:9, Romans 5:11, Philippians 4:7, 1 Peter 1:8]

Jesus says: “Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28). His own sweet word to all that are

⁶ ‘Imputed’ means to place to the account of another. ‘Justification’ is the judicial action of God’s making us right with Himself, through fulfilling in Christ the just penalty required of His law.

⁷ By “experience” the author is speaking of one’s own feelings, thoughts, and actions. You cannot be saved by simply wanting to be so, making a decision of your own, doing something, or having some “experience.” You must instead call upon the Lord to save you by faith. He has done all the work on the cross.

wearily and heavily laden, is, "Come unto Me, and I will give you rest." If your guilt is a burden so heavy that you will soon sink under it, come to Jesus, and He will lift it from off your soul, and give you immediate rest. Do you feel yourself to be lost? Well, "the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10). Is He not seeking to save sinners? "Look unto Me and be ye saved," is His own loving exhortation (Isaiah 45:22).

Can you refuse to turn your eye towards the Pierced One? Can you reflect upon His dying love, and not believe that He is willing to save? Can you think of Him as Jehovah-Jesus (the God-man, fully divine and fully human), the everlasting Mediator, and not credit His ability to save? "He is able also to save them to the uttermost who come to God by Him, seeing He ever lives to make intercession for them." With the love of a brother, with the compassion and mercy of God, He beseeches you now to embrace Him as your Savior. Do you regard yourself as vile, guilty, worthless, and lost? Such He saves—"Not the righteous, but sinners Jesus came to call." [Hebrews 7:25, John 15:15, Psalm 145:8, Matthew 9:13]

How wonderful must be this word of the Savior be to a troubled soul—"Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson they shall be as wool" (Isaiah 1:18). "Come now!" notwithstanding all the transgressions, pollutions, ingratitude, formality, and indifference of your past life. Come with all these without attempting to make yourself acceptable in the least degree. Do not think your sins too many, too aggravated, or too great to be forgiven. If you would avoid being saved, you must arise and flee by stifling the words of Christ, lest the river of grace should bear you onwards to a glorious eternity. Can you hesitate to embrace such a full, free, perfect, and eternal forgiveness of all your sins, as that which the Gospel holds out to you, and presses upon you? "Behold the Lamb of God," and be saved (John 1:29)!

Your Situation

I conceive of your case in this way: You appear to be like one who, by going too near the brink of a cliff, has slipped over it, and caught hold of the twigs of some shrub growing in the crack of a rock, to prevent himself being dashed from crag to crag, and laid a mangled corpse in the abyss below. Jesus is seen standing on the nearest ledge, and calls to you to let go your hold, and he will certainly preserve you from impending destruction. If you will believe and act according to Jesus' direction, you will be delivered.

But you feel that you are in imminent danger—hanging over the brink of an eternal hell; and you feel you must hold onto anything that seems to afford the slightest possibility of deliverance. You may be hold-

ing firmly onto religious good works: hearing the preaching of the Word, prayer, conviction of sin, reading of the Bible and religious books, by tears, repentings, resolutions, and anxieties—but all these are mere twigs which you are holding onto as you feel yourself hanging over the mouth of hell. *They cannot save you!* If no one appears to deliver you and take you to a place of safety, you will inevitably perish!

But the Lord Jesus—the sinner’s Friend—appears stretching out His merciful arms, and calling upon you to let go all human means of salvation, and if you trust in the work He did on your behalf He will certainly save you with an everlasting salvation. Hear His voice, listen to the gracious words (Luke 4:22) that proceed out of His mouth, and let go your every hold. And if you do so in obedience to His call, and trust in His ability to save, you will find yourself leaning on the divine Redeemer, and feel that the eternal God is your refuge, and that underneath you are “the everlasting arms.” This done with childlike simplicity; He, having sought and found His lost sheep, will lay you upon His shoulders rejoicing, carry you about all your life, and place you at last in the everlasting sheepfold on the banks of the river of water of life in Emmanuel’s land.⁸ [Deuteronomy 33:27, Psalm 119:176, Matthew 15:24, Revelation 22:1, Isaiah 8:8]

The main point has been this: that the awakened sinner must quit all *religious self-dependence*, and only trust in the work of Jesus for His salvation. [Mark 8:34-36, Luke 14:33]

Salvation Is a Gift

The salvation of God is set before a world of lost sinners; and the gracious invitation of Jehovah is given to every poor thirsting one: “Ho! Everyone that thirsteth, come ye to the waters” (Isaiah 55:1). O dear soul, come to the waters of salvation. “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.” Put your trust in God that He will blot out all your sins for Jesus’ sake, and you will soon be led to cry out in wonder, “Who is a God like unto Thee, that pardoneth iniquity!” for you will then know in your own experience the preciousness of pardon to a burdened soul. [Acts 16:31, 2 Corinthians 6:2, Micah 7:18]

Pardon of sin is the only thing that can give life, light, and peace. You will never have any true godliness unless you are “accepted in the Beloved” (Ephesians 1:6); and you can never have a happy soul until you have a consciousness of pardon and acceptance with God through Christ. There is forgiveness with God and He promises it freely, therefore “seek ye the Lord while He may be found, call ye upon Him while He is near” (Isaiah 55:6). If you go to God through Christ, confessing your sins, you

⁸ ‘Emmanuel’ is a biblical name for Jesus in the Old Testament which means “God with us.”

will find Him faithful and just to forgive you your sins; and from personal experience you will be enabled to say,

“O Lord, I will praise Thee; though Thou wast angry with me, Thine anger is turned away and Thou comfortest me. Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid; for the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song: He also is become my salvation” - Isaiah 12:1.

Cast yourself at Emmanuel’s feet as a poor, perishing sinner crying, Lord, save me! If you perish there, you will be the first who ever did. “Him that cometh unto Me,” says the loving Jesus, “I will in no wise cast out” (John 6:37).

*Nothing in my hand I bring,
Simply to Thy Cross I cling;
Naked, come to Thee for dress,
Helpless, look to Thee for grace;
Foul, I to the fountain fly,
Wash me, Savior, or I die.*

Study Questions

Lesson 2 Look to Jesus

First please read the preceding text.

Condemned to die

1.
 - a. What makes a person a “lost sinner?”
 - b. Do you agree that a person in this condition is on his way to hell? Explain your answer.
 - c. *Briefly*, how does Romans 3:23 apply to you personally?
[Note: the standard of comparison is not other people, but the glory (perfection) of God!]
“For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.”
- Romans 3:23
2. What is the right or ‘just’ penalty for your sin?
[To be ‘just’ is to be with justice, that is, to be upright according to the law.]
“For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” - Romans 6:23
“Almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without the shedding of blood there is no remission [forgiveness of sins].” - Hebrews 9:22

What God did

3. What did Jesus do for sinners?
4. What is “God’s chief aim” in history?
5. How did Jesus “make peace” for us?
6. What is “the sad result of sin”?
7. *Briefly* and in your own words,
 - a. Why do you think God will not simply “clear the guilty” by excusing their sin (without a penalty being paid)?
 - b. What is the overall message of the following Scriptures?

“*The Lord will take vengeance on His adversaries, and He reserveth wrath for His enemies.*” - Nahum 1:2

“*God is angry with the wicked every day.*” - Psalm 7:11

“*Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity.*” - Habakkuk 1:13

“*The law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good.*” - Romans 7:12
8. The author says “This exchange was wonderful, and full of love.” Briefly, describe what is meant by “this exchange” in your own words. (Also include a thought from 2 Corinthians 5:21.)

“*For He [God the Father] hath made Him who knew no sin [Jesus], to be sin for us; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.*” - 2 Corinthians 5:21

If you want pardon

9. If you want pardon from God, what must you do?
10. a. Describe the “error so common among anxious souls.”
b. In your own words, why is this an error?
11. Is it right to attempt to make yourself more acceptable because your sins seem too many—because you think God could never forgive you as you are?

Salvation is a free gift

12. a. As a sinner (one who is born loving sin, not God), do you think there is anything you can do to help earn your salvation? Explain why briefly.
b. What must you do to help to earn your salvation that has not already been accomplished by Jesus?
13. Is salvation a joint effort between God and man?

The Nearness of Jesus

“Let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith.” – Hebrews 10:22

Jesus Is Near!

God has appeared among us in “the man Christ Jesus,” who is Emmanuel—“*God with us.*” He is “God with us” for the express purpose of saving us from our sins. “He was manifested to take away sin.” [1 Timothy 2:5, Matthew 1:23, 1 John 3:5, Matthew 9:2]

We should not think of “God our Savior” (Titus 3:4) as far removed from us, for He is indeed *very near*. He was very near to the men among whom He lived when He was on earth, for they saw Him with their eyes, heard Him with their ears, handled Him with their hands, sailed with Him in the same boat, walked with Him on the same road, sat with Him at the same table, and slept with Him under the same roof.

And He is as near to you now as He was to the men of His own day. He is not so near in a *physical sense*, but quite as near to *faith and advantage*. What He was then, He is now more so by His gospel, the written Word. We who have the written Gospels are better off in many ways than those who lived with the Lord. We long to see Jesus with our eyes, but they were often in want of seeing Him with understanding. We have every advantage of seeing in God’s Word the outcome of perplexing events, and the divine interpretation of the same by the inspired Apostles. Jesus has not left us alone, but has blessed us in a greater way than those who lived with Him during His earthy sojourn (1 Peter 1:8-12).

What the Scriptures Say

“...the Word is near thee, even in thy mouth and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith which we preach, that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved” - Romans 10:8-9.

“The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father), full of grace and truth” - John 1:14.

“...the God of all grace, who hath called us unto His eternal glory by Christ Jesus...” - 1 Peter 5:10.

“Unto you is born a Savior, who is Christ the Lord” - Luke 2:11.

The God of all grace assumed our nature and dwelt among us as one full of grace and truth. The leading idea of redemption is the doing away with that which has created the moral distance between God and us. “For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God.” And now, in Christ Jesus, those who were by nature and by transgression far off, are brought close by the blood of Christ, for He is our peace. His gracious doings and sufferings have removed all cause for remaining at a distance from God. And if there could possibly be any further question about His kindness, His gracious manner while on earth is calculated to annihilate the distance between poor, needy sinners and Himself. [Hebrews 2:14, Romans 5:11, 1 Peter 3:18, Ephesians 2:13]

The God whom we have given just cause to be offended with us is still reconciling sinners unto Himself in Christ, not reckoning guilt to them for their trespasses. And when we take into our consideration all that He has done, and all the manifestations of His grace and good will to men which He has shown, and His striking manner towards the needy ones who came to Him when on earth, we cannot avoid coming to this conclusion: His mission to our world was to inspire the alienated children of men to have the *fullest confidence in Him*.

When we read the four narratives of the life of Jesus (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John) we hear the conclusion of the whole matter, “These are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life through His name,” surely we cannot help saying, “All things are ready,” the way of life is open, Christ is *drawing near*, “let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith.” [John 20:31, Matthew 22:4, Hebrews 10:22]

All this is very precious, and full of consolation to the awakened sinner. He is “the Lord our righteousness” (Jeremiah 23:6), and by faith you may claim Him as yours, and say with confidence as you embrace Him, “in the Lord have I righteousness and strength” (Psalm 71:16).

He has “power on earth to *forgive sins*” (Matthew 9:6). As another has truthfully said, “Forgiveness is brought *near* and sure to the soul—the word of faith to the heart and to the mouth—this annihilates distance, and makes pardon a present blessing.”

Jesus the Same Today as Yesterday

Let us think of Jesus as the Gospel history exhibits Him to our view. He is the same in grace now as when He said to the man sick of the palsy, “Son, be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee;” the same as when the

woman who was diseased with an issue of blood twelve years, who touched the hem of His garment and heard Him say to her, “Daughter, be of good comfort, thy faith hath made thee whole;” the same as when the two blind men cried as He passed, “Thou son of David, have mercy on us,” and He touched their eyes, saying, “According to your faith be it unto you,” and their eyes were opened; the same as when He put His hand on the leper, saying, “I will, be thou clean, and immediately his leprosy was cleansed;” the same as when “all the publicans and sinners *drew near* to hear Him;” the same in grace is Jesus still as He was when He “went about doing good”. [Matthew 9:2-6, Luke 8:44-48, Matthew 9:27-28, Matthew 8:3, Acts 10:38, 1 Corinthians 15:3]

Christ has not gone back to retire within the temple veil, nor bound up that which was rent from top to bottom in the temple. He has not built again that which He destroyed. It is not a worldly sanctuary that He fills and furnishes again, nor ceremonies, observances, rites, and practices under which He is again concealing Himself. He has descended from heaven to earth. He is abroad among men in the ministry of His precious gospel, and by His Spirit He is beseeching sinners to be reconciled to God. This is the Christ of God, the Friend of sinners, the Savior of the lost. This is the Jesus who says to you, O anxious one, “*Come unto Me and I will give you rest.*” The gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, when rightly understood and truly believed, supplants and utterly sets aside all the elements of a fleshly religion, in which man is so prone to trust. [Matthew 27:51, Hebrews 10:20, Matthew 11:28]

Fleshly Religions

“**Works Religion**” is the use of various man-made ideas on how to be right with God, apart from God’s Word. Examples include confessions to priests and the performance of penance (and, more common in our day, “sinners prayers,” “altar calls,” and re-dedications). It is not that these acts in themselves are wrong, but they become a problem when we depend upon the act itself in order to receive favor with God.

Superstition is the religion of many. Many are depending on something they have done for their salvation, rather than God’s gift of grace through faith. Many of these have a superstitious dread of God, and use various methods to keep God at a distance so that He will not pour His wrath upon them. While it is right to fear God, our fear must be based on God’s Word, and God’s Word says that a proper fear of God must always be mixed with faith in His goodness. Hear Psalm 33:18 and Psalm 31:19: “Behold, the eye of the LORD is upon them that fear him, upon them that hope in his mercy”; “Oh how great is thy goodness, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee; which thou hast wrought for them that trust in thee before the sons of men!”

While many have not heard of God's Son of grace, those that have often have a distorted view of Him. In God's Word, Jesus Christ is "full of grace and truth" and is one "who can have compassion on the ignorant and them that are out of the way" (John 1:14; Hebrews 5:2). God's Word proclaims that Christ is willing and able to save all who come to Him in honest repentance and simple faith. When we realize the precious truth that Jesus, the Son of Man, has power to forgive sins, and that He is the same today in His grace that He was when He said to the poor sinful woman who washed His feet with tears, "Thy sins are forgiven; thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace," there is an end made to all the unbiblical fears of superstition (Luke 7:50; 12:32).

"Priestly Religion" (the religion of using a priest to represent you to God) is another falsehood that is set aside by true faith, faith that apprehends Jesus as a Savior ever near. Many have no other religion than that of priests. But that is not the religion of the New Testament. In the Old Testament, there was a divinely appointed priesthood by whom the worshippers approached God. They had to come by the consecrated path, and have their affairs transacted by a consecrated priesthood, or else they could not be accepted. But this served only as a shadow of good things to come, and was entirely set aside when the great High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus, entered into heaven with His own blood; there to appear in the presence of God for us (Colossians 2:17; Hebrews 9:11-24).

God appoints no earthy priests now, and all who know Jesus as that heavenly priest who has power on earth to forgive sins, trust to no human priesthood. Having Jesus, they feel their need of no other priest, and are convinced by Scripture that the age of earthy priests is past (see Hebrews chapters 8, 9, and 10).

"Program Religion" is also set aside by faith in Jesus, Who is ever near. It is sad to think that many are the victims of "religiousness" as well as of worldliness. There are millions whose idea of Christianity is so low and erroneous that they believe the Church, with all its various programs, merely to be an institution equipped with machinery for making people religious, just as a factory is equipped with machinery for turning out the goods made by it. Most people seem to have no realization of the leading truth of Christianity that, "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners" (1 Timothy 1:15). The conduct of most church people seems to indicate that they have imbibed the idea that Christ came not "to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10), but to put the stamp of His approval upon those using their best efforts to improve themselves. For many religious people, self-improvement is salvation. Sadly, religiousness is the commonly held "hope" for most of mankind, a hope that is sure to fail.

The *religious* man thinks that “worship makes (improves) the worshipper,” and therefore he diligently sets about worship in order to get accepted. The religious man brings his gifts as the bribes or payments of the criminal, not as the thank-offerings of the forgiven child. He worships in order to pacify God, and to persuade Him to extend favor towards him. But God cannot own a religion whose aim is to buy His love, to persuade Him to be gracious, and to accept the worshipper on account of the multitude or excellence of his services. “But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him” (Hebrews 11:6).

True Christianity Is Christ

How different from all the above is the work of Jesus! He says, “Son, thy sins be forgiven thee” (Mark 2:5-9), and never breathes a whisper about any *service* the man had rendered to *earn* it. Jesus accepts no works, His glory is all His own: Jesus works for the sinner who trusts His righteousness as sufficient for his redemption. Jesus sets the sinner free, and sends him out, well knowing that from gratitude and a changed heart, he is “free to serve, and not to sin.” Jesus drawing near, and freely dispensing His grace to sinners of every sort, cuts up *religiousness* by the roots. The saved man thereby trusts God’s promises and work in Christ, not his religions endeavors or experiences for salvation!

“Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which He hath consecrated for us through the veil, that is to say, His flesh; and having an high priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water” - Hebrews 10:19-22.

[Please note: once the Lord saves us, we will certainly desire to walk in His ways and serve Him, out of a motive of love for Him (and not to earn His favor). Those who “take Christ’s free salvation,” but who still love their sin, show themselves to be without a new heart, and are subject to the Lord’s rebuke: “I never knew you!” (Matthew 7:22-23). Please see also Romans 8:12-13; Matthew 10:38, 11:28-30; John 14:15, 21, 23. Also note that while Salvation is free, it is costly to follow Christ in this evil world (Luke 14:25-35). But consider that “he is no fool who gives up what he cannot keep for that which he cannot lose” (Jim Elliott, mission martyr, 1956).]

Study Questions

Lesson 3 The Nearness of Jesus

First please read the preceding text.

Jesus is near!

1. How near is Jesus to you now, as compared to how near He was to the people He met in New Testament times (when He walked on the earth physically)? Briefly explain your answer.
2. How are we better off than those who lived with Jesus during His earthy sojourn?

Fleshly religions

3. a. What is the “religion” of *superstition*?
b. Why is it false?
4. a. What is the “religion” of *Sacerdotalism*?
b. Why is it false?
5. a. What is the “religion” of *religiousness*?
b. Why is it false?

True Christianity is Christ!

6. Briefly, how is the work of God through Christ different from all these other religions?
7. Why does Jesus accept no works of ours?
8. On whose behalf does Jesus work?
9. What do those who “take Christ’s free salvation,” but who still love their sin, show themselves to be?
10. Read Luke 14:25-35. Salvation is not earned; it is free, and eternal in its benefits. But what is the cost of following Christ in this brief life on earth?

Rest for the Weary

“Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” – Matthew 11:28

Do You Need Rest?

This world contains many laboring and heavy-laden ones. For the awakened sinner this is a place of sorrow and sighing, a vale of tears and woe. Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and *full* of trouble. As wave follows wave upon the seashore, and as season succeeds to season, so trouble follows trouble in the life of man. Sin has entered and brought guilt upon the world’s children, and a curse upon its soil. Suffering and sorrow, misery and death, have followed in the terrible train of Adam’s sin, and there can be no *real* rest enjoyed until sin be put away from the guilty, and no *everlasting* rest until they be finally removed from sin itself. Earth’s children have all along had a general consciousness that there was something wrong with them, and they have made repeated attempts at changing their condition and obtaining rest for their souls; but all these have proved unsuccessful: evil has not ceased, and paradise has not been restored. The world does not afford materials for real and uninterrupted blessedness.

Each heart also knows its own bitterness, and each individual feels his particular sorrow. All do not feel burdened with the same kind of evils. To one, the burden may be a personal affliction; to another, a family trouble; and to a third, a depression in worldly circumstances. But all do feel, at one time or another, so much of what is evil as to make them conclude that this is an evil and unsatisfying world. And when we look around and take an intelligent view of the condition of society, we shall find it such as to force us to the sad conclusion that this is a sinful, sorrow-stricken, laboring, and heavy-laden world. Such words as, *“Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest,”* must surely convey to the awakened sinner the appropriateness of the invitation given the true state of the world we live in.

Who Gives This Invitation?

Who gives this invitation? It is the voice of Emmanuel that falls upon the ear. These are the words of the compassionate Redeemer that meet the weary eye. It was the Word made flesh that spoke these precious words. Let your mind rest on that striking fact. He “spake as never a man

spake” (John 7:46). But no man could ever be expected to speak like Him; for though He was in the form of a servant, and in the likeness of man, He was, nevertheless, the Son of God, and as such perfectly knew the Father. This is what He said regarding Himself: “No man knoweth the Son but the Father, neither knoweth any man the Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him”(Matthew 11:27).

What a discovery is here made of the work of Jesus! He reveals *God as a Father* to poor outcast sinners. This is surpassingly gracious. He not only makes known the mind of God, but He reveals *His heart*. Being a partaker of the Father’s nature He makes no mistake in speaking of the Father. “God hath, in these last days, spoken unto us by His Son” (Hebrews 1:2). He hath spoken to us by Him in words and deeds that have no parallel—and He speaks to us by His Father in words of infinite tenderness, love, and warning.

But there is something more in the person of Jesus that is fitted to arrest our attention. He is not only “the brightness of the Father’s glory, and the express image of His person,” He is also a partaker of *our* nature. He was “a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.” He was weary, hungry, and thirsty: He knew the depths of poverty, and felt the burden of daily toil. He is able to reveal all that the Father is and has in His heart toward us; from being a partaker of the nature of man, He is able to sympathize with us, suffer for us, and make our case His own. This, then, is He—the God-man—who stood by the waters of the mountain lake of Galilee, and addressed the multitude standing there, and all future mankind by His Word. [Hebrews 1:3, Romans 8:3, Proverbs 17:17, Isaiah 53:3]

Marvel at this: we alive now may know more of Him than they knew of Him to whom these words were first spoken. By His Word we know Him as the First and the Last, and the Living One who was dead, and is alive forevermore (Revelation 1:18). We hear the call from Gethsemane; we hear it from Calvary; we hear it from the celestial throne. He was delivered for our offenses; He was wounded for our transgressions; He was raised for our justification; He is exalted for our sanctification (the process by which He conforms us to His character); He will come again for our eternal salvation. His words reveal the Father still—as does His finished redemption work, and as does His Holy Spirit, when He illuminates the darkened soul.

Who Does Jesus Invite?

Who is it that is invited by Jesus to come to Him? “*All ye that labor and are heavy laden,*” is His reply. Notice the qualification, if you are not heavy laden, you are not invited! We believe none will avail themselves of the invitation until they begin to feel their personal sin, and their very being or sinful-self to be a burden. Are you pricked in your heart, and

ready to cry out with sinners of old, “Men and brethren, what shall we do” (Acts 2:37)? Do you feel that your sins are going over your head as a heavy burden; and that on account of your transgression and sinful self you are brought down to hell because of them? Let us look at the words, “labor” and “heavy laden,” and see how expressive they are. The word “*labor*” here signifies more than mere working. The expression, “Ye that labor,” means, “Ye who have engaged in labor till you are quite spent, toil-worn, and weary.” Men sin against God with as much energy as if they were working for their daily bread. They weary themselves to commit iniquity. They toil in the service of sin as if they thought its wages would be good—not death. Are you a toil-worn sinner? Are you feeling exhausted and burdened under the load of your transgressions? Then you know what it is to be “heavy laden.”

The original reference of “*heavy laden*” is to the lading of a ship—the more it takes in, the deeper it sinks. This represents the condition of an awakened sinner. He has been *loading* himself with sin, and he has gone on so long that he feels he dare not take in anymore. If you are sensible of your sins you will feel yourself to be sinking down to deserved perdition by your own weight. How alarming is such a position!

Sinners are working at a dreadful task. With hard and impenitent hearts they are daily treasuring up unto themselves wrath for the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who will render to every man according to his deeds. How awful the occupation! How dangerous the treasure! How miserable the doom! Many toil hard in treasuring up wrath, but never reflect that in the day of wrath they must receive their own fearful accumulation. But some, by God’s grace, become alarmed at their terrible employment, and tremble. The Holy Spirit takes up the accumulated mass, and for a season lays it upon them. Under its crushing weight they feel as if they were sinking in a sea of wrath. This can be a great mercy of God.

Dear friend, has the Holy Spirit taken up the burden of your guilt and laid it upon you? If so, then, you will know truly what it is to be “heavy laden!” Thank God for the most awful convictions He may send you of your guilty and lost condition. It is better to bear the torment of a burdened conscience for a little season in time, than in the world to come, eternally. If you are in anxiety about your salvation, if you are truly brought low by the Spirit of God, and made to cry, “God be merciful to me a sinner!” (Luke 18:13), then will you enter into the spirit of such passages as these:

“Mine iniquities are gone over mine head as an heavy burden: they are too heavy for me. I am troubled; I am bowed down greatly; I go mourning all the day long. Mine iniquities have

taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up. They are more than the hairs of my head: therefore, my heart fails me” - Psalm 38:4,6; 40:12.

How distressing is such a state! But it is very hopeful, because only by grace can a man know his true condition before God. Christ was anointed and sent forth to preach the gospel to the poor, and heal the brokenhearted. Is your conscience burdened and disquieted? Then consider, for your relief and comfort, the invitation here given: “*Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.*”

The Invitation Is Gracious

The first thing I wish you to notice about this invitation of Jesus is its *graciousness*. It is out of the glory of His love and mercy that He thus invites lost sinners. Grace brought Him into our world; and out of grace He went about doing good. It was out of genuine mercy that He went about towns and villages teaching and preaching the gospel of salvation. Jesus is “*full of grace and truth.*” He has the same compassion now that He had then; and His grace is flowing as fully in the channel of His Word as when He was made flesh and dwelt among us. Is it not a most gracious call the Savior gives you? You are unworthy of His regard—you are yourself thoroughly worthless, and yet He calls you! You were perhaps not seeking Him; but if you hear His voice, He is certainly seeking you. “The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.” How gracious! “Come unto Me, and I will give you rest.” [Matthew 11:21-23, John 1:14, Luke 19:10]

The Invitation Is Sincere

The next thing I would wish you to notice in this invitation is its *sincerity*. There is very much insincerity among men. Many give invitations they never mean to be taken. They would even feel annoyed if they were embraced. But this can never be the case with Christ Jesus, for He is called “Faithful and True.” He asserted His own truthfulness when on earth, and even called Himself “the Truth” (John 14:6). He is “the True One;” and in calling sinners He is sincere. When He says “Come,” He means just what He says. You will be your own enemy if you embrace not His sincere invitation.” [Revelation 19:11, John 14:6, Jeremiah 10:10, Hebrews 10:22]

The Invitation Is Suitable

The next thing I would have you notice about this invitation is that it is *suitable*. It is accompanied with the promise what you need most: “Come unto Me, and I will give you *rest*.” Rest is what the toil-worn, weary man needs; and nothing else can prove a substitute for it. So *spiritual rest* is what the laboring, heavy-laden sinner needs, and nothing else can

compensate for it. When the storm of conviction is beating upon him, and the waves of guilt are like to overwhelm him, there is nothing desired as much as rest. The gift of Jesus—rest for the troubled soul—is the most precious thing presented to the children of men. And it is well always to bear in mind that it is a gift. “I will *give* you rest.” The literal meaning is, “I will cause you to rest.” [Heb. 4:1-11]

He must be the cause, source, and giver of your rest if you are ever to have real salvation, and not be led astray by the doctrines of men. Christ stands calling you to repent and believe. He does this not as some abstract Idea, but as He is, the living God. You must get your faith from Him, or it is a counterfeit faith, one very common in our day.

Christ was here, on this very earth. Although we do not now see His form and hear His voice, we are to believe, for it is really true, that He lives and speaks to us by His Word. Salvation cannot be disjoined from the personal, living God. You must come to *Him* (and not the God of your imagination) if you would have Him give you rest; and if you do indeed come to Him, as He reveals Himself in Scripture, you will find that He is faithful who has promised.

The Rest Is Threefold

The rest needed is threefold: rest from your un-quietness with regard to your guilt; rest from the enslaving tyranny of your corruption; and rest from the weariness caused by battling with sin and evil. The *penalty*, *power*, and *presence of sin*, are the chief sources of unrest, and from them all Jesus promises to deliver us.

1. Penalty of Sin

If you come to the Lord Jesus, He will cause you to cease from your trouble regarding the *punishment of your sins*, by showing you how His once dying was the propitiation (the appeasement of His wrath) for sin (1John 2:2, Romans 3:25). If He plants your foot upon the rock of His finished work, then your soul will be secure. If He clothes you in His own righteousness, you will be able to lay down your weary head upon His blessed bosom and enjoy refreshing rest; for you will know that the Lord sustains you. Christ alone is our peace. He is the peacemaker with God; He alone is able to give peace to man. He has made peace by the blood of His cross, and whosoever comes to Him comes to peace. The un-quietness of the soul is dissipated by the sprinkling of the blood that cleanses us from all sin. If God is for us, who can be against us? Who then can hold us guilty, and thus make trouble? (Romans 8:31). “Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Romans 5:1).

2. *Power of Sin*

He will also give you rest from the *slavery of sin*. You have been the willing slave of sin. You love it, and have run greedily in its service. Sin is an unstoppable power in the man who is apart from Christ. He could no more cease from sin than a stone let out of the hand could, while unobstructed, cease descending towards the earth. If unconverted, you are on the inclined plane that sinners descend from earth into the bottomless pit, and you must inevitably slide down and perish unless rescued from your fall.

You may desire to deliver yourself, but all your efforts will prove fruitless. You may even pray against your besetting sins, but apart from divine interference, they will remain besetting sins still. You may resolve and endeavor a hundred times to cease from sin, but you will find that Satan cannot cast out Satan. Christ alone can do it. He says, "Without Me ye can do nothing" (John 15:5); but He also says, "Come unto Me, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28).

Dear fellow sinner, do you desire your corruptions to be weakened, and the body of sin so destroyed that henceforth you will not serve sin? Then come to Christ for a new heart, for, by bestowing it, He will give you deliverance from this dreadful bondage. "Sin shall not have dominion over you" (Romans 6), if you are in Christ Jesus. "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away, behold all things are become new" (2 Corinthians 5:17). "I will put My Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in My statutes" (Ezekiel 36:27). When the Lord Jesus subdues sin by His almighty Spirit, then will "the peace of God, which passeth all understanding" keep your heart and mind (Philippians 4:7). "The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus" will set you "free from the law of sin and death" (Romans 8:2).

3. *Presence of Sin*

God promises one day give the believer rest from all his *weary struggles* with sin and evil. It is not an easy thing to be a Christian. Christ promised no easy way out of this present darkness. There must be a constant warfare waged with sin (Matthew 5:29-30). The experience of the Apostle Paul, in Romans 7:22-25, is that of all believers: "I delight in the law of God after the inward man: but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members." And under the feeling of this struggle—the flesh lusting against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh—he is found crying out, "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" He knows that there is One able to save, and therefore, he adds, "I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord." There is a time coming when we shall enjoy unbroken rest. No sin

shall ever vex us again, and no evil shall ever distress us in that place. With Jesus, in His kingdom, we shall enjoy the rest that remains to the people of God, one that lasts forever.

In light of this future promise, look and see that now is the time for weary, heavy-laden sinners to come to Christ to get their guilt removed, and obtain renewing and refreshment for their souls. How well adapted to our condition is this precious invitation!

The Invitation Is to All That Labor

Further, it is a *general* invitation to sinners laboring and heavy laden: “Come unto Me, *all* ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” There is no want of compassion in our Lord Jesus. He is calling lost sinners with a general invitation to come to Him that they may be saved. But, as we have said, none will embrace the offered mercy but those who are conscious of their miserable and burdened condition. The exhausted are the persons who value rest; and the whole have no need of a physician, but they that are sick. It is a great comfort to know that all the spiritually weary and heavy-laden may come to Christ. All may come; all are invited; and he that comes will be in no wise cast out (John 6:37).

Poor sin-tortured, heavy-laden one, here is good news! The Master is come, and calls for you. Be of good cheer; arise and go to Him. He is moved with compassion for you. Ah! Tarry not; linger not. You are called, and called by Christ Himself, as truly as if you had stood among those who surrounded Him in the days of His flesh, when, with His living voice, He gave this divine call near the sea of Gennesaret. You are disquieted greatly, and sore troubled. He has a loving word of invitation for you: “Come unto Me, and I will give you rest.” He will give peace and refreshing rest. He will bestow upon you rest, and joy, and comfort, of which you could have no conception. As He is drawing near and *speaking to* you, so draw near to Him and *speak*. Let out the whole cause of your sorrow and trouble; tell Him all. Call upon the name of the Lord, and tell Him in your own words that you are come for His freely offered rest. Keep not your soul-damning silence, but call out! God has no prayerless children. Confess your sins (1 John 1:9). Seek pardoning mercy. Lie at His footstool and implore Him to heal and bless your soul; do not give up until you have obtained pure and free grace. God may tarry to test your metal (test your resolve), but persist and you will not be sent empty away (Luke 11:1-14).

The Invitation Is Unconditional

We would desire also to impress it upon your mind, that this invitation is entirely *unconditional*. It is given freely: it is not burdened with conditions. The gospel of the grace of God comes to you with an unutter-

able freeness. It requires you to do nothing either to merit it, or to qualify yourself for receiving it.

There is a desire on the part of awakened sinners to get mercy upon certain terms; but God's mercy is given to all who will ask "without money and without price." "Come, everyone that thirsteth, come ye to the waters!" (Isaiah 55:1). One would think that nothing could be more unconditional than such an invitation; and yet men have tried to turn even this into something meritorious. Repeating the large-hearted call of God, we would encourage sinners to come to the waters and drink freely, for the refreshing of their souls. "Come, everyone that thirsteth!" is the word of *unconditional grace*; but the legal heart, from misapprehension, or perverseness, or both, fixes on the *thirsting*. These complain of a lack of thirst, or thirst of the proper kind, alas, none are born thirsting aright! (Romans 3:9-12) Never think that your sincerity, remorse, or desire form a price by which the priceless waters can be purchased. The call does not run thus, Come! Everyone who has sincere, genuine spiritual thirst, come ye to the waters." This is not salvation, even though many preach it in our day. God supplies what He demands! Faith is a gift of God! You must go to God for everything pertaining to your salvation! Salvation is of the Lord and He alone will get the Glory for your safe arrival in His kingdom.

If you have been fixing your thoughts upon the "Coming" of the Savior's invitation, and asking—"How am I to come?" remember this proceeds from a legal state⁹ of the heart. Resist the devil: he would have you to look at your coming, and neglect the freeness of the invitation. Listen, this is important; the Holy Spirit as has used a variety of expressions in order to prevent this error. For example, the invitation is stated in Scripture in many different ways; in one place, "come"; in another place it is said, "look"; in another, "believe"; in another, "hear"; all this to prevent you from fixing on the act of your own mind or will, and instead to direct you to fix all your attention upon the object, which is Jesus Christ.

It is Christ who saves you, *not your coming to Christ*. Mere human trust mustered toward some religious idea or purpose is not saving faith. Human effort is not a condition of salvation, or else "grace is no longer grace." True saving faith is a gift of God. It is true that we are to come to Christ for salvation; but our coming is not a work that saves us. Salvation is of faith that it may be by grace. Faith is one of God's gifts; and surely it cannot be that the possession of one of His gifts should merit anything.

⁹ The "legal state of the heart" is the condition of all men apart from true faith in Christ. All relations to God in that lost condition are based on trying to keep God's law, in order to avoid offending Him. But such efforts are doomed to failure apart from God's grace in salvation.

“For by grace are ye saved, through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God.” [Romans 11:6, Ephesians 2:8, John 1:12-13]

The Invitation Is To Be Accepted Now

When Jesus called out, any burdened sinner could have pressed through the crowd and asked for the promised blessing. There was no time specified; they understood it, that they should come to Him that very moment. This is the case still. “Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation” (2 Corinthians 6:2). It is not tomorrow, or at some future time, you are exhorted to come to Christ now. It is “today, if ye will hear His voice” (Hebrews 3:7). Are you sinking under your burden? Are you weary, and in need of immediate rest? It is good news, surely, to be told that Christ will ease you of your burden today! You cannot be so insensible to your own soul’s advantage as to wish Christ had been giving His invitation for tomorrow, or some future day. “Ye know not what shall be on the morrow” (James 4:14). “Thou knowest not what a day may bring forth” (Proverbs 27:1). You are called now. You are exhorted to believe in Jesus now, to the saving of your soul. Christ calls you to give you present blessedness. O weary sinner! Press through the multitude with your load of sin, suffering, care, sorrow, and pollution, and you will find Him graciously inclined to “give you rest.”

Delay seeking God’s favor through Christ, and you show you love sin more than His promised relief. And if you slight His free offer, will you wonder when you find the door shut after you play with your sin another season? (Hebrews 3:7-19, Galatians 6:7)

Study Questions

Lesson 4 Rest for the Weary

First please read the preceding text.

Do you need rest?

1. When is the only time when *real* rest can be enjoyed?
2. What is there about the world we live in, that makes the promise “*I will give you rest*” so welcome?

Who gives this invitation?

3. Why is Jesus able to sympathize with us?

The invitation is gracious, sincere, and suitable

4. Why is the invitation *suitable*?

The 'rest' is threefold

5. How does Jesus give the sinner rest from the *penalty* (punishment) of his sin?
6. How does Jesus give the sinner rest from the *power* (slavery) of sin?
7. How will Jesus give the sinner rest from the *presence* of (his weary struggle with) sin?

The invitation is to all that labor

8. a. Based on the words of Christ: "all ye that labor...", is anyone who is heavy laden excluded from the invitation? Why or why not?
- b. Could you be excluded because you have sinned too much? Explain why or why not?
- c. Is it wise to think that living as a Christian will be painless? Why or why not? (Read Matthew 7:13-14 and 10:22-25.)

The invitation is unconditional

9. a. Have you ever heard an "altar call," or been asked to sign a card, or say a prayer in order to "be saved"?
- b. Do you think that changing your location in a building (going forward), signing a card, or repeating a prayer can save you? Why or why not?
- c. Can you see that the "walking down an aisle," and other actions are conditions that modern men have put on salvation? (One is said to "be saved" if they *do* these things!) Explain your answer.
- d. Is it wise to trust in these modern conditions, or should you seek God diligently until He gives you genuine faith with a new heart? Explain your answer briefly.
- e. Why did the Holy Spirit use different expressions such as "come," "look," "believe," and "hear" in His invitation for you to come to Christ?
- f. Do many fall into the trap of fixing (focusing) on the *act* of coming to Christ? Explain your answer.
- g. What is the trap of "fixing on the coming"?

The invitation is to be accepted now

10. a. Do you believe God is drawing you to Himself now?
- b. If so, is there any reason to delay your responding to Him?
- c. Is there a danger in neglecting God's wonderful free offer of salvation in Christ? (Hebrews 3:7-19, Galatians 6:7)

- d. In what ways can it be a blessing to feel heavy laden with sin?
 - e. Have you ever wondered about those who seem happy in sin and not afflicted by God? (If so, read Psalm 73 and apply the main idea of verses 16 to 20 into your answer).
11. What fresh insights have you gained from this course that are meaningful to you?

*May you be encouraged
to continue studying God's Word.
Please write for your next course now!*

Notes